

THE
BUSINESS ADVENTURES
OF BILLY THOMAS

BY
ELMER E. FERRIS

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1915
All rights reserved

Copyright, 1913 and 1914
By THE OUTLOOK COMPANY

Copyright, 1914 and 1915
By THE PHILLIPS PUBLISHING COMPANY

Copyright, 1915
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
Set up and Electrotyped, Published April 1915

TO MY WIFE

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. REORGANIZATION	I
II. BRINGING HOME THE BACON	24
III. TAKING CHANCES	48
IV. WINNING OUT	89
V. GET ON GOOD TERMS WITH YOUR JOB	98
VI. BUSINESS AND FEMININITY	120
VII. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY	143
VIII. THE BOY'S EDUCATION	165
IX. BASEBALL, BOOKS AND BUSINESS	178
X. A MATTER OF BIG MONEY	201

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES OF
BILLY THOMAS ·

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES OF BILLY THOMAS

CHAPTER I

REORGANIZATION

BILLY THOMAS was shipping clerk in the Boyd & Bidwell Coffee & Spice Mills at a salary of eighty-five dollars per month. He was twenty-two years of age. He aspired to become a traveling salesman, but he lacked the courage to make the venture. Among his associates he was considered a successful young man; but as he sat in his room gloomily looking into vacancy it seemed to him that failure was staring him full in the face.

He sprang up and began to pace the floor back and forth. Suddenly he removed his coat, vest and shirt, and surveyed himself in the mirror.

"Nix, it isn't physical. You weigh one hundred and sixty pounds and are as well put up

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

as the next man. What in thunder is it inside of you that made you afraid of that porter Connelly this afternoon?"

He put his clothes on and again fell to pacing the room.

"When a man is scared up it must be all in his mind," he mused. "He wouldn't be afraid if he didn't think it. Sure, it's a way of thinking about things! That's where the trouble is with you, Billy—right in your cocoanut."

He resumed his seat upon the edge of the bed and meditated. He wondered if there might not be some way to change the constitution or habits of the mind. His knowledge of mental processes was limited. He had never studied psychology. But it looked reasonable that if a man could strengthen his body by exercise he could do something of that kind with his mind.

"Why, sure," said he aloud, "a fellow can change his thoughts. There's a way to beat it, and I'm going to find it." He stepped up to the mirror again and looked himself in the eye. "Never you mind, Billy; you are going to find a way out of this, and don't you forget it. Shake!" He reached out his hand. He had formed a definite resolution and he felt better. He looked at his watch. It was 10:30. He

OF BILLY THOMAS

had been in his room four hours, and had eaten no supper.

The following evening on the way up from the office Billy stepped into a book store. "I've got a friend that's always getting scared up," said he to the clerk. "Have you got some book that tells how to straighten out a man's thinking apparatus?"

"Certainly, loads of them," replied the clerk. "There's a great deal being written, these days, upon that subject. Here's one called 'The Courageous Life.' Here's another entitled 'How to Overcome Fear,' and we have another on 'Forethought versus Fearthought,' and there's——"

"Never mind any more I'll take a chance on this one," selecting "How to Overcome Fear." "How much is it?"

"One dollar "

Billy handed over the money and hurried home. After a hasty supper he repaired to his room and took up the book. It was a non-technical work written in popular style and full of easy optimism, the underlying proposition being that "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Billy was carried along upon the current of the author's enthusiasm. It was as clear as day. Think right, and there will be no such

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

thing as fear; and thoughts are subject to control. The chapter on "How to do it," largely a system of mental exercise and autosuggestion, especially fascinated him. He read this chapter twice. It was midnight when he laid the book aside.

"By George, he's dead right!" he muttered as he prepared for bed. "There's nothing else to it. Well, the way to do a thing is to go to it. That fellow says that the best time for autosuggestion is just before you go to sleep. This is where Billy gets into the game".

As he settled himself in bed he tried to recall the author's program. "Let's see; how did he say to go about it? Does a fellow talk it out loud or does he just think it? What is it that he has got to think?"

He tried in vain to recall some practical hint on how to start the autosuggestion in motion. He was also at a loss to know just what to autosuggest. He arose and turned on the light and opened the book once more at the chapter "How to do it."

"Form in your mind a picture—a mental image—of yourself as being a man of nerve, courage and fearlessness. Fancy yourself in situations that require those qualities, and put them into exercise in your thoughts. Assert to

OF BILLY THOMAS

yourself over and over again that you possess those qualities. Do not allow yourself to entertain a thought of fear, and when such a thought occurs to you immediately assert the opposite."

Billy closed the book and once more sought his couch. He shut his eyes and proceeded to form a mental image. "See that fellow there—that's Billy Thomas—he's got courage—he's a nervy cuss—he isn't afraid of anything—Jim Connelly thinks he's got Billy's number—he's giving Billy some back talk now—Billy isn't afraid of him—see here, Connelly, I won't stand for this—I——"

Billy sat up in bed and scratched his head. "Gee, this sounds like hot air! I don't see what good it does to start off with a pack of lies. Anyway, I guess I'll leave Connelly out of it on the start."

He lay down again and began once more. He was too sleepy to attempt another mental image, so he contented himself with some personal assertions. "I'm a man of courage—I've got loads of nerve—I'm not afraid of anything—I'm a scrappy guy—I'm—I——" Being a healthy young man he had fallen asleep.

The next morning he awoke late. He had only thirty minutes in which to eat breakfast

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

and reach the office. "Gee!" he exclaimed as he hurried into his clothes, "the old man will ——" He checked himself. "None of that fear stuff now. No danger about the old man. He knows you keep your work up. You'll get there on time."

Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography tells how he once undertook the attainment of moral perfection by persistently practicing the moral virtues one at a time. He candidly admits that he never reached the goal because, as he naively observes, while he could detect some advance in the particular virtue to which he was giving exclusive attention there seemed to occur some corresponding lapse in the others. However, his conclusion was that he had made some progress all along the line.

Be that as it may, it is probable that Benjamin Franklin never pursued any one virtue more persistently than did Billy Thomas his mental quest for courage. Persistency was one of Billy's natural qualities.

Whatever may be the nature of that "stream of consciousness" called the mind, it can undoubtedly by constant practice be diverted into new channels, and those motor impulses which lie at the roots of habit can be trained to work

OF BILLY THOMAS

automatically in the mind as well as in the body, and yet——

As the days went by Billy frequently experienced the exhilaration that comes from a state of mental aggressiveness. He projected himself into a thought-world of belligerency and victory, a world in which he was the central and triumphant figure. His mental conception of himself as a man of aggressive and conquering spirit continually expanded. He felt a secret pity for men who were afraid. Before a month had passed he felt confident that he had won out.

About this time, while getting out a shipment of "B & B" coffee one afternoon, Jim Connelly called his attention, in an insolent sort of way, to the fact that they were running short and the office should be notified.

"Gee, the old man will call us down for that," observed Billy. "He never likes to have us run low."

"Well, it's your business to watch the stock as well as mine. See?" growled Connelly.

Billy had thought that he had lost his fear of Connelly, but as he confronted him he felt himself beginning to quail. He turned and went back into the shipping room without making any response. His knees felt weak and he

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

was trembling slightly. "Same old yellow streak!" he groaned in disgust.

That evening while Billy was on his way home a child darted suddenly past him out into the street directly in front of an automobile that came whirling around the corner. Prompt action alone could save the child from going under the wheels. Billy stood rooted to the sidewalk in terror. Just then a lady rushed past him, and seized the child and dragged it back as the machine whizzed by. It was a narrow escape. As the lady stepped back upon the sidewalk she shot a glance of contempt at Billy, which cut him like a knife. He hurried up the street to escape further notice. Reaching his boarding house, he went to his room and locked the door. His fine mental edifice of courage and optimism had crumpled at the first attack like a house of cards.

"It's all off!" he exclaimed despondently. "What's the use of trying to jolly yourself into being some other kind of a fellow? You can't think yourself out of your natural constitution. A coon might as well try to think himself into a white man. Gee, it's a fierce proposition—this getting scared up."

He sat down, and sank into the depths of

OF BILLY THOMAS

gloom with no attempt to check himself. Auto-suggestion would have looked like a joke.

At last his self-contempt became unbearable. He put on his hat and started gloomily down the street. As he wandered listlessly along, his eye rested upon a bulletin placed conspicuously in front of a public hall—

PROFESSOR WILLIAM BOWDEN
OF THE
BOWDEN PHYSICAL CULTURE INSTITUTE
WILL LECTURE THIS EVENING
ON
FEAR, COURAGE AND PHYSICAL
CULTURE

ADMISSION 25 CENTS
LECTURE BEGINS AT 8 O'CLOCK

Billy paused and read the bulletin. He glanced at his watch. It was five minutes before eight. "Well, this looks like another slant at the question. I guess I'll drop a quarter into the slot and see what I draw."

The hall was well filled. The lecturer, who was an athletic, aggressive-looking man with a clear, convincing style, opened his address by briefly tracing the general prevalence of fear and pointing out its debilitating effects upon

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

life. "No matter what business or profession a man may follow," said he, "life is a struggle and he must make a fight for it, and I undertake to say that one of the most essential qualities for success is the aggressive spirit. We get just about what we see ahead of us in this world—we never get any more than we see. Courage is seeing one's self about to win. Fear is seeing one's self about to lose. The man who is afraid is already defeated.

"Now, some men are born with the aggressive spirit. They naturally do not know what fear is, but most of us are afraid of something and some of us are afraid of nearly everything. The important question is, Can that aggressive spirit be acquired? I am here to tell you that it can be done. I acquired it myself. As a boy and young man, up to the time I went to college, I had a fearsome and timid disposition; but I think I can fairly say to-night that for over ten years I haven't known what it is to be afraid, and I am going to tell you how I did it."

Billy Thomas was probably the most interested listener in the hall. He leaned forward in his eagerness to absorb every word, and as the speaker traced the different stages of his own progress and described his final emancipa-

OF BILLY THOMAS

tion from fear Billy's hopes had once more risen to the point of determination.

After the lecture he approached Mr. Bowden, and introduced himself. "I would like to have a chance to talk with you," said he. "I'm in just about the same fix that you used to be."

"Very well, come around to the Institute tomorrow evening at 7:30, and we will talk it over," said Mr. Bowden.

Promptly upon the appointed hour Billy presented himself.

"Now then, tell me all about yourself, and don't conceal anything," admonished Bowden.

Billy frankly disclosed his whole case.

"Now why is it," he asked in conclusion, "that I couldn't make that mental stunt work? Isn't fear all in the mind? And why is it that a man can't get over it by just training his mind?"

"No, fear isn't all in the mind, especially physical fear, which is your principal trouble. Physical courage is largely a matter of nerve poise, and that has its origin in a sound, well-trained body. To be sure, the mind and the nerves react upon each other, and what you have been doing is an excellent thing and you should continue it, but you have gone at the matter too one-sidedly. In your case the physi-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

cal basis of courage is more fundamental than the other. See here, Thomas, are you anxious enough about this to do just what I tell you?"

"I will stand on my head if that will get the fear stuff out of me," rejoined Billy.

"Well, I may have to stand you on your head before I get through," laughed the professor; "but we will begin with a month or so of general physical culture. If you are in dead earnest and will do just what I advise, it won't be three months before you will be wondering why you ever got scared at all. You can put fear out of your life absolutely—no doubt about it whatever."

During the next month Billy entered heartily into Bowden's physical culture program, spending nearly two hours a day in long walks along the lake shore park and country roads. He practiced deep breathing and room exercises night and morning, and spent three evenings a week in the Institute gymnasium. Meanwhile, under Bowden's advice, he continued the course of "thought culture" which he had previously pursued.

"Gee, but this is great!" he exclaimed one evening as he was returning from a brisk walk in the park.

"What is great?" inquired George Robbins,

OF BILLY THOMAS

one of the boarders, as he descended the front steps.

"Why, the smell of things. I'm just beginning to find what a bully old smell there is to the leaves and grass and the breezes off the lake. Believe me, George, this physical culture stunt is great stuff."

"Say, Billy, you better look out or you'll get to be a physical culture crank. It's easy to get dopy over those things. Do you remember Joe Dixon that boarded here last year—how he went daffy over chewing his food? Gee, he used to make his jaws work like a piston rod, and he didn't think of anything else. These fellows that spend all their time getting fit——"

"Oh, sure, a fellow wants to get fit for something besides being fit. It is his work that he wants to aim at. You take it from me, George, physical culture gives a man a crotch-hold on his day's work; but most men won't take the trouble to go through it. I met Jack Pfister a few days ago—you know he pitches in the National League. He was telling me about their spring training trip. Those fellows get so lame and sore that they can hardly roll out of bed in the morning. What do they do that for? Why, to get fit to play league ball. Just suppose a man would go to it like that to get fit

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

for business? Believe me, this physical training fills a man full of pep."

A few weeks later Bowden turned Billy over to the wrestling instructor for a month or two of wrestling lessons.

"Go at him easy at first," Bowden advised the instructor, "but after a while I wish you would begin to rough it with him. Thomas has a good physique, but he's afraid of getting hurt. We must take that out of him."

After about six weeks of wrestling lessons Bowden himself took Billy in hand for a course of boxing lessons. By this time Billy had gotten into such fine physical condition that he saw no need of adding boxing to his repertoire.

"What's the good of it?" he protested. "I don't intend to be a pugilist. These fellows that are always swelling around looking for a scrap make me tired."

"The good of it lies right here," replied Bowden; "it increases a man's self-confidence, and that protects him from trouble. Haven't you ever noticed among dogs that when a dog is a scrapper the other dogs leave him alone, but if he is afraid they pitch into him? Men are something like that. Another thing: Boxing increases a man's aggressive spirit, although if he is anything of a gentleman it doesn't make

OF BILLY THOMAS

him quarrelsome. Then, too, it is better than any other exercise in taking the fear of physical injury out of a man. You will make a good boxer, Thomas, and I want you to get into the game."

As the weeks went by Billy became a proficient boxer, and yet his progress did not quite suit Bowden.

"One trouble with you, Thomas, is that you flinch too much; you are afraid of getting hurt," said Bowden one evening, while they were engaged in a bout.

"Well, who likes to get hurt? I don't," protested Billy.

"Yes, but you have the wrong idea of it. There isn't so very much pain in the world—in fact there is mighty little compared with the amount of freedom from pain. How much actual pain have you suffered in five years? Come now."

Billy rubbed his chin reflectively. "I had a tooth filled last year, and that hurt some," he grinned.

"Yes; how long did it hurt? About ten seconds. What really hurts is being afraid of it. It really doesn't hurt a man any to get knocked down. It's the idea that hurts, not the blow. As a matter of fact a man can get knocked

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

clear out and not feel much actual pain. You are getting pretty aggressive, Billy, but there is one more thing you need to learn, and I am going to give you a lesson right here. Now then, stand right up and fight. That's what I'm going to do."

"Oh, come now!" objected Billy, as he blocked one of Bowden's swings, "don't get nasty."

"Sail in there! You are going to get a pommeling," snapped Bowden. "If you back down I'll knock you out cold."

"All right. I bet I get a lunch while you get a full meal," muttered Billy desperately.

As a matter of fact Thomas had become a good boxer, and now under the pressure of necessity he showed surprising form. He made a sudden rush, and feinting Bowden slightly off guard planted a terrific jolt upon his jaw that sent him back against the wall.

"Fine! Fine!" cried Bowden delightedly. "You've got a wallop there, Thomas. Uncork another one."

However, it was only a moment later when Billy received a left hook that sent him to the floor. He sprang to his feet and went at it again. Neither of them gave any quarter, but

OF BILLY THOMAS

Bowden finally wore his pupil down. In the course of the bout Billy was floored twice.

"There, that will do," said Bowden finally. "It didn't hurt much to get knocked down, now did it?"

"Not so very much," admitted Billy.

"We are going to have a scrap like this once a week. As a matter of fact there isn't much fear left in your system. Isn't that so, Thomas?"

"I guess that's what," grinned Billy.

A few weeks later during the afternoon of an unusually busy day, while getting out a large shipment on a rush order, Billy thrust his head through the shipping window. "We'll have to get a move on, boys," he called cheerily, "we've got to have this shipment out before six o'clock."

It so happened that Jim Connelly was in a surly mood.

"If you want it to move any faster you better come out and move it yourself," he growled impudently, and he turned and winked at the other porters, expecting that Billy would subside as usual. But it suddenly occurred to Thomas that a settlement with Connelly must come sooner or later and that this was a proper time for it. He also noted that he felt no hesi-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

tation about forcing the matter to an issue. He laid aside his pencil and shipping book and stepped out into the stock room.

"See here, Connelly, I didn't say anything that called for that remark. It looks as if you are trying to pick trouble with me. What do you mean by it?"

The porters suspended their work, amazed at Billy's aggressive attitude.

"Oh, I guess I mean what I say," replied Connelly coolly. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Just this," rejoined Billy, as he removed his coat and threw it upon some packing boxes. "I am going to give you a thrashing or you will give me one. Now defend yourself."

The astonished porter threw up his guards, but before he could fairly set himself he received a blow in the left ear that sent him to the floor. He gathered himself and made a rush, but Billy sidestepped him, and this time planted a blow squarely in Connelly's right eye. Meanwhile the other porters started to interfere.

"Stand back there, fellows," ordered Billy, "this is between Connelly and me."

Connelly now closed in and began to rough Billy around, but after a moment of maneuver-

OF BILLY THOMAS

ing Billy secured a crotch hold and brought his antagonist heavily to the floor; he then sprang back and waited for him to get up and come on again.

The office boy going through the stock room caught sight of the encounter. He ran to the office door. "Billy Thomas is mixin' it with Jim Connelly!" he cried, and then ran back into the stock room to watch the fight. The bill clerk and entry clerk also ran out and joined the spectators. The fight was now going at a furious clip. Connelly, although lacking in science, was a heavier and stronger man than Thomas and at rough in-fighting was a dangerous opponent; in fact he was beginning to tire Billy out, although to all outward appearances Billy was getting the better of it.

At this point Mr. Boyd, the senior member of the firm, came running out and forced his way through the onlookers. "What does this mean!" he cried. "Why, this is disgraceful! Stop this at once—stop, I say!"

It is probable that no other man in the house could have checked Connelly, but everyone stood in awe of Mr. Boyd. The men stopped fighting.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Boyd indignantly. "Connelly, go and wash the blood

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

off your face. Mr. Thomas, come into my office."

"Well?" said Mr. Boyd, as he closed the office door. "What is your explanation of this affair? Have you any complaint to make against Connelly?"

"No, sir."

"Did he assault you?"

"No; but I just had to fight or lose my self-respect."

"Did he insult you?"

"Not exactly; but the fact is, Mr. Boyd, that Connelly thought I was afraid of him. I'd rather not say anything more until you get his explanation."

Mr. Boyd rang the bell for the office boy. "Go and tell Mr. Connelly to come to my office."

A moment later Connelly came in, looking sullen and defiant. His right eye was closed and one of his front teeth was missing.

"Mr. Thomas is unwilling to make any explanation until you have a chance to be heard, Connelly. What have you to say? Have you any complaint to make against him?"

"No, I guess not."

"Did he assault you?"

"Well," replied Connelly hesitantly, "he is

OF BILLY THOMAS

just as much to blame for the fight as I am, and I guess that's all I want to say."

"I dare say you thought that Thomas wouldn't fight. Isn't that about it?"

"I guess so."

"Well, you evidently found out that he would," smiled Mr. Boyd grimly.

"All the same, in ten minutes more I'd 'a' had him," fired up Connelly.

"Don't be so sure about that," interrupted Billy; "I had a few more wallops left."

"There now, no more of that!" commanded Mr. Boyd. "The question is, can you men get along peaceably? You are both good workers and I would dislike very much to lose you, but if such a thing should occur again you would both be discharged. How is it, Mr. Thomas? Can you get along with Connelly?"

"I think so. He is a good porter. I believe we understand each other now."

"Well, Connelly, it is up to you. Can you get along with Mr. Thomas?"

"Sure."

"Very well then. Shake hands, and drop the matter." Billy held out his hand and Connelly grasped it heartily.

Later that afternoon Mr. Boyd was telling Mr. Bidwell about the fracas. "It was cer-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

tainly an interesting scrap," laughed he. "But it astonished me to see what a pugnacious chap Thomas is. I never suspected it—he is such a good-natured fellow."

"Well, when it comes to a test you want to look out for these pleasant fellows," smiled Bidwell. As a matter of fact Mr. Bidwell was a pleasant fellow himself.

"I am wondering," mused Boyd, "if Thomas might not be a good man to put out on the road. He ought to make a good salesman. He has a way of making friends, and he certainly has the aggressiveness."

"Possibly. But if he has any ambition along that line he will no doubt broach the matter himself."

"Yes. We'll wait and see what he does."

That evening as Billy stalked up the street toward home he was in an exultant mood. He had given a good account of himself, and he realized that he was no longer afraid. "Connelly will never get your goat again, nor any other man," he muttered. "Now then, Billy, old boy, it's you for the road."

That evening as he was sitting in his room bathing his right hand with witch-hazel there came a rap at the door and George Robbins entered.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Say, Billy, come on down to——" He paused as he noticed Billy's swollen fist and the court-plaster upon his chin. "What's the matter? Had an accident?" he inquired.

"No; a mix up with one of my porters."

"A regular scrap, eh?"

"You would think so if you could see Jim Connelly's face."

"Gee, your fist is swelled up like a baseball mitt! Did you lick him?"

"No—it didn't go to a finish. The old man came out and butted in. He hauled us up on the mat and roasted us good and plenty."

"Did he discharge you?"

"Discharge nothing. The old man is something of a sport himself. I've seen him rooting out at the ball games, but of course he couldn't stand for a rumpus in the store, so he roasted us."

"Gee, I'd hate to mix it with one of them rough-necks. I don't believe I'd have the nerve."

"Oh, well, it's like this, George," said Billy patronizingly; "when a fellow has got a lot of those husky porters working under him every day, he has just got to let them know that when it comes to a show-down he'll fight; you know otherwise he couldn't control them at all. See?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER II

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

WHEN a man has done something worth while in the world he finds a large element of satisfaction in returning to the scene of his former activities. It affords a pleasant contrast between the past and the present and offers an excellent opportunity to talk about it.

When Billy Thomas stepped off the train and headed up the street toward his former boarding house he was in a complacent and expectant mood. He had just completed his first trip as a traveling salesman and in his pocket was a recent letter from his firm congratulating him upon his work. He had a good appetite for supper and was sure to meet all the boys again. They had wished him all kinds of good luck when he started away on the trip, and they would be eager to learn how he had made it go. He had pictured the scene out when he was coming in on the train, and when he arrived at the boarding house the situation

OF BILLY THOMAS

worked out very much as he had anticipated. The boys were delighted to see him. He occupied his old seat at the table. Some of the fellows who had seen the ball game that afternoon described it in detail. The home team won. Life seemed good.

"Gee, fellows, it's great to get back to the old hash foundry," said he as the boys dropped into his room after supper and he passed around a box of cigars. "Smoke one of the best cigars you ever stuck into your countenance. That's our B & B brand. We get sixty dollars a thousand for that cigar."

"Say, Billy, tell us about your trip," requested George Robbins.

"Yes, and don't give us any hot air," suggested Tom Morrison. "Does salesmanship look as good as it did before you tackled it?"

"Better," asserted Billy. "I can prove it," and he produced a letter from his company which he showed to the boys, and which read as follows:

"DEAR MR. THOMAS:

We wish to congratulate you upon the results of your trip. It will no doubt gratify you to learn that you are doing fully as well as any of our men did upon their first trip. We shall

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

express our appreciation in a more substantial way if you keep the work up, as we think you will.

Very truly,
BOYD & BIDWELL, C. & S. M."

"Gee, you made a home run right off the bat, didn't you?" commented George.

"Yes, I did—not. I got my bumps good and plenty. Say, didn't Matty have the Indian sign on the Pittsburghs yesterday, though. They won't head the Giants off this year."

"Never mind the Giants, Billy. Tell us about your trip."

"Why, that letter tells the story, doesn't it?"

"Nix. What we want is the details. What was your first town and what did you do?"

"Well, when I took the train here that day I felt pretty new. A new job and a new suit of clothes and a new sample case—I wished I could rub some of the varnish off. I didn't feel any too cocky either. Here's a funny thing: when a fellow reaches a position that he has been wanting for years, why, the responsibility gets his goat. When I took my seat in the train all I could think of was this: 'Now you've got there, it's up to you to make good.'"

"It's that way with everything," interrupted Robbins. "Jim Ritchie told me that when he came in from the bushes and signed up with

OF BILLY THOMAS

a league team he got cold feet right away thinking about facing those league batters and——”

“Oh, come, can that baseball, George, we want to hear about Billy,” said Morrison.

“Sure, but I was just corroborating him. Go ahead Billy—shoot.”

“It occurred to me,” continued Billy, “that I didn’t know the hotels at my first town, so I asked a traveling man about them. He said to stop at the Leland. I asked him what the rates were and he said three and a half up. I asked him if there wasn’t some good two and a half hotel in town, and he said, ‘Yes, the Commercial is a pretty good hotel, but, see here, isn’t this your first trip?’ ‘That’s right,’ I said. ‘I thought so,’ said he, ‘and let me give you a pointer. Put up a good front. If you stop at a second-class hotel people will think you’ve got a second-class house, or that you’re a second-class man.’ ‘Well, you bet I’ve got a first-class house,’ I said, ‘I represent the Boyd & Bidwell Coffee & Spice Mills.’”

“‘Yes, that’s a good company,’ said he, ‘and you don’t want to cheapen them by traveling second-class. Another thing—be good to your stomach. A first-class hotel has got better food and it is better cooked and the rooms are more comfortable. A man can sell more goods

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

when he feels comfortable. There's a whole lot in appearances, too. The only man who can afford to travel second-class is a man who has made his reputation and got there. Take old Burnham, the boot and shoe man—he has been going up this line for twenty years and sells everybody. He goes around in his shirt sleeves. Why, that old guy could sleep in a haymow and feed on crackers and cheese, and people would call it eccentricity; but you can't afford to be eccentric—not yet. You must do the proper thing.' 'But a new man ought to keep his expenses reasonable,' I said. 'Sure, keep them reasonable, but not low,' said he. 'You will find this out, that if a man comes across with the orders his house won't kick if he travels first-class, and if he doesn't sell the goods, why, a low expense account won't save him, and there you are.' That sounded like good sense, so when I reached my town I went to the Leland and asked for a three and a half rate."

"Say, half a week's board for just one day at a hotel! That's going some," observed Tom.

"Sure; you've got to put up the mazuma when you travel on the road," continued Billy. "It was late in the evening and I went to bed

OF BILLY THOMAS

early. I felt a little lonesome and wished it was morning so I could go to work. I got up early next morning and hung around the hotel for an hour after breakfast waiting for the merchants to open up their stores. I thought I would get the jump on any competitors that might be in town, see? Well, about half past eight I took my sample case and started out. The first store I went to was owned by a man named Bell. He wasn't in. He owns a farm and had gone out there for the day. I talked with his head clerk and found out all I could about the business, and right there, a scheme popped into my head that I'm carrying out—a card index scheme. See here," and Billy opened his grip and took out a package of cards. "Now, here is the card about Bell's store: 'Good stock — well kept — advertises — buys Crown Coffee, Merriam & Flint—good baking powder trade—no specialty—sell him phosphate—stand in with Caldwell—baseball—fishing.' Of course after a while a fellow won't need these cards, but they're a good thing on the start. I can get our phosphate baking powder into that store. Caldwell, the clerk, is a baseball bug, and likes to fish, too. I am going fishing with him next month.

"The next store I struck was Graham &

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Jones. Old Graham does the buying. He was busy and grouchy and hardly looked at me. He just grunted when I told him I represented the Boyd & Bidwell people. Well, I thought of a piece of advice in that book on 'Handy Salesmanship' that I had been studying where it said, 'When dealing with a busy man it is well to be pointed and direct. Have your proposition all formulated and urge it upon him for a quick decision.' I saw that Graham wouldn't spend any time getting acquainted, so I jumped right into my proposition. 'See here, Mr. Graham,' said I, 'that B & B coffee makes the best kind of a leader. I'll put you in two drums at twenty-five.' 'You will, will you?' 'Sure,' I said, 'and I'll get it here in less than four days. What do you say?' 'Nothing doing,' said he, and he turned his back on me and wouldn't give me a chance to say another word. Now, wouldn't that jar you?"

"Didn't it make you feel punk, Billy?"

"Yes, pretty punk. Then I went on a little farther, as they say in the story books, and went into a place kept by a man named Cushman. He seemed like a nice sociable fellow and acted as if he was glad to meet me. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'I know the Boyd & Bidwell firm, a good firm, excellent firm. Yes, yes, so you

OF BILLY THOMAS

represent those people, do you?' That looked like a pretty good starter, and I told him about our B & B coffee. He had heard about it and agreed that it was a corking good coffee. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'that is a well-known brand, an excellent grade; yes, indeed.' I thought it was all over but the shouting, so I pulled out my order book. 'Let me send you up a couple of drums,' said I. 'No, not to-day, no,' he said. 'I'm well supplied just now. Come in again some other time, yes, some other time.' You see he was one of these mushy devils that agrees with everything you say till you get down to the real point, and then backs up and leaves you right where you started. I believe I prefer an old groucher like Graham. You can tell where he stands, anyhow.

"I went back to the hotel and sat down and thought a while. I wondered what was the matter. Then I remembered another thing in that book, where it said that a good plan sometimes is to give a buyer some advice about how to build up his trade. It struck me that I had been too easy. I ought to kick in with more confidence and put up more chest; so I went down to a big store where they had a grocery department, the Smith & Grainger Company. Mr. Grainger does the buying. He was a

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

pretty good listener and let me do all the talking. I told him how he could get the coffee trade of that town by making a leader of our B & B brand, and I gave him some tips on the best way to advertise it. I was handing him out a line of advice that sounded pretty nifty to me, but all at once he butted in. 'See here, young man,' said he, 'I have been in business here for eighteen years. You wait till your pin feathers have sprouted before you crow so loud,' and he walked off and left me."

"Gee, that was a stomach punch, Billy, wasn't it?"

"Sure, he was dead on to me. I made three other calls and didn't sell a thing. It was noon by that time, and I went back to the hotel for dinner. I didn't have any appetite either. The bill of fare was about a foot long. They put on lots of style at that hotel, and it made me tired. I didn't give the waiter any tip either—that tip business looked like a hold-up. Three fifty a day was beginning to look pretty big, too. After dinner I struck up a conversation with a traveling man, a hardware salesman. He asked me if it was my first trip. Say, there isn't any use for a new salesman to try and hide it any more than for a new married couple. Your motions give you away. I told

OF BILLY THOMAS

him yes, it was my first trip, and I hadn't made a sale all the forenoon.

"‘That's nothing,' said he; ‘I didn't sell a thing for two days when I started out.' ‘Didn't it get your goat?' I asked. ‘Well, I didn't feel any too gay over it,' he said, ‘but I believed I could sell goods and I kept hammering away till I got them coming. I've got a pretty good trade now. I have been at it eight years, and let me tip you off to the most important thing in salesmanship—just keep plugging. I got a new motto lately. I went to a theater and heard a play called “You Never Can Tell.” It didn't have anything to do with business, but the title stuck in my craw and it occurred to me that it was a mighty good motto for a salesman. You see, Mr. Thomas, people don't always buy goods on logic. Half the orders you get is where the buyer just takes a notion to give it. Of course your goods and prices have got to be right, but half the time it's the personal element that turns the scale—you never can tell. The way to do is to go after everything, like Hal Chase plays first base, see? And you can bet your bottom dollar that things are so constituted that a hard day's work will get results in the end.’

“That sounded pretty good, and I went out

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

and bucked into it again. I went to all the rest of the grocery stores in town except one, and I didn't sell a cent's worth. When five o'clock came I was dog-tired and not a scratch on my new order book. That didn't look much like a home run right off the bat, George."

"More like a string of goose eggs," assented George.

"Well, I went up to the hotel and I was feeling—— Say, you can talk about optimism, but you take it from me, when a man is out to sell goods it's a mighty sight easier to be optimistic when he's getting orders than when he's getting it in the neck. Just as I was going into the hotel I thought about that hardware man's motto. You see, that store that I didn't tackle, the Hoadley Supply Company, was the biggest one in town, and the reason I didn't go there was because I heard that old Hoadley was the hardest man in town to sell, and that he was a terror to traveling men. Sits all over them, see? I thought if I couldn't sell the other merchants I certainly couldn't sell him, and I had been sat on enough for one day; but I said to myself, 'Oh, well, you never can tell,' so I hiked back to that store.

"When I went in and saw what a big first-class place it was I got cold feet. I decided

OF BILLY THOMAS

that I wouldn't try to sell Hoadley anything, but would just get acquainted with him. He had been having a busy day and had just sat down in his office to rest a little. He invited me to take a seat. He was a big fellow with bushy eyebrows and a sharp eye that looked right through you. 'So you want to sell me some goods,' said he. 'Well, I don't want anything.'

"I thought I would be frank with him, so I told him that I hadn't any idea of selling him anything. 'This is my first trip,' said I, 'and this is my first town. I've been working here all day and haven't sold a thing. If I can't sell these other merchants I don't see how I could sell you.' 'Then why did you come in here?' he asked. 'I thought it wouldn't do any harm to get acquainted,' I said, 'and maybe you'll give me a little advice.' 'What about?' he asked. 'Why, about business—how to sell goods. I guess I need some.' 'Oh, well,' said he, 'this matter of selling goods, Mr. Thomas, is something that every man must work out for himself. Advice isn't of much account. Of course there are some general principles. I buy most of my goods from men that I have found to be square—men that look after my interests as well as their own and men who rep-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

resent good concerns. A salesman's way of talking goods doesn't count with me. I know what I want and where I want to get it.'

"I asked him how long he had been in business there, and he began to tell me how he came to that town thirty years ago without a cent and went to work in a grocery store. When a man sits down to rest after a day's work he gets kind of mellow and confidential, and old Hoadley told me how he had built up that big business. I asked him a question occasionally, but I didn't say a word about selling him anything, I didn't think there would be any use.

"Finally he said, 'So you are with the Boyd & Bidwell Company. You have a good house. I bought a shipment of their B & B coffee once about nine years ago.' 'Didn't you like it?' I asked. 'Yes, it was good coffee,' said he. 'How do you sell it now?' I told him twenty-five cents, and I asked him why he didn't keep on using it. He said he got a better deal from the Merriam & Flint mills on their Crown brand. 'It wasn't any better coffee,' said he, 'but I got a better price. I've been using that brand ever since; but here is a fact about a coffee blend: it may be kept right up to grade, but in time people seem to grow taste-tired. I have had some complaints lately about that

OF BILLY THOMAS

coffee.' He took out his knife and sharpened a lead pencil and handed it to me, and told me he wanted me to do some close figuring on one thousand pounds of B & B coffee with a chance of getting a standing order.

"As soon as I could get my breath I told him I knew the lowest price that the company would make on a big standing order—twenty-four cents. 'All right,' he said, 'send along five hundred pounds at once and the other five hundred in thirty days. If it goes as well as I think it will I shall place a standing order for five hundred pounds a month. You will have to excuse me now, Mr. Thomas,' said he, 'I have some matters to look after.'

"Well, say—when I put that order down in my book and started back to the hotel I didn't know which end I was on. I went in to supper, I was hungry as a wolf. Maybe that supper didn't taste good! That Leland was a corking good hotel. I gave the waiter a tip and went out and wrote the order up right after supper. I read it over half a dozen times before I mailed it. Believe me, it looked good."

"You won that game in the last half of the ninth, after two down and two strikes," grinned Robbins.

"Sure, and it shows that a man wants to keep

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

playing the game — You never can tell. A few days after that I ran across a couple of salesmen who gave me another idea. One of them was an old duffer seventy-nine years old; on the level, he was seventy-nine, so everyone said. He had been traveling over that territory for fifty years selling groceries. He wore long white whiskers, regular Old-Testament whiskers, and he would sit on a cracker box and pull those whiskers and tell about when he first came to that town fifty years ago, and, say, everybody bought goods from him because they had always known him."

"I see your point, Billy," interrupted Morrison; "a salesman ought to be an old geezer with whiskers as long as a horse's tail."

"Nit; my point is this: It pays to have something distinctive, something different, see? The other salesman was a young fellow. He sold tobacco and he hired a span of Shetland ponies that day and blanketed them with white cotton cloth that was printed all over with signs of his special brand of tobacco and cigars. He drove those ponies up and down Main Street and got everybody to talking and laughing about it to beat the band. That fellow sold lots of goods, too. He was another man who had something different. I've been thinking

OF BILLY THOMAS

about that, and I am going in for some special scheme on B & B coffee. Believe me, we've got the finest blend of coffee on the market and——"

"That's what they all say," broke in Tom. "My uncle keeps a grocery store——"

"Dry up, Tom. It's Billy's spiel."

"I know they all say it," resumed Billy; "but somebody has got to have the best, and Boyd & Bidwell undertook the job and put it across, too. But here's a big point in selling goods: you've not only got to have quality to turn the trick, but you've got to make people take notice. Quality don't get you very far if you don't make a noise about it. The popularity of a brand is about fifty per cent. quality and fifty per cent. racket. I'm wondering how I can work up some new kind of a racket on coffee, and I am just getting a tail-end hold of a big idea. You know some people think that coffee is injurious; but do you gents realize that four grains of caffeine a day are actually beneficial and——"

"What's caffeine, Billy?"

"Why, caffeine is what puts the kick into coffee. If it wasn't for caffeine there wouldn't be any coffee, see? Well, in one of those big Eastern colleges a professor has been experi-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

menting on coffee. You know they have machines now that will tell you the effect of everything you eat and drink, and this professor claims that four grains of caffeine a day helps a man out in great shape. Two cups of coffee, certain kinds of coffee, contain about four grains. I've got his article in my grip here. Now, it's dollars to doughnuts that the particular blend in B & B coffee produces just the right proportion of caffeine, see? I'm going to get up a little round sticker that has on it:

‘DRINK B & B COFFEE FOR
PURITY—HEALTH—PUNGENCY’

and I'll put a little spiel on it about that four grains of caffeine. I am going to slap one of those stickers into every place where there's a chance. I'll plaster them all over my sample case like these fellows just back from Europe who want everybody to know it. I'll hire some guy to wear one of these sandwich signs along the street. When Billy Thomas comes to town, why, everybody will know that the B & B coffee man is on the job. I am going to pull off some coffee stunts that will make that tobacco man look like a piker! You watch my smoke.”

“Never mind what you are going to do,

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy; tell us what you did do. Did you put over some other good sales?"

"Oh, yes; I was going to tell you about another big streak of luck I had. I struck a town about two weeks ago where all the clerks and young fellows go in for gymnastics and boxing. You know every town goes daffy on something, a baseball team or a gun club or something. Well, in that town it was all boxing and gymnastics, and whenever a new fellow would come to town why they would get him up to the gymnasium and run him through the sausage mill. I guess that every clerk in town belonged to that gymnasium. In one of the biggest stores there the head clerk, a fellow named Sid. Harrington, practically runs the store. One of the partners does the buying, but he buys whatever Harrington says. If you sell any goods there you have got to stand in with Harrington. I tried to sell them, but I couldn't put it across.

"Harrington is one of the best athletes in town and a corking good boxer. About a week before I was there a young fellow came along on his first trip for a wholesale grocery house and the clerks got him up to the gymnasium and had a circus with him. They put him through all their gymnasium stunts and he stayed with them because he didn't want to

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

flunk out, and then they got him to put on the gloves and say, what they did to that young fellow was a fright. He got so bunged up that he had to stay in the hotel all the next day. Well, the day I was there they mixed up the same kind of a dose for me. They were all nice as pie to me and invited me to stay over the evening and come up to the gymnasium. I never suspected that they were putting up a job. You know it's hard to see it when people are stringing you. I thought I was getting to be a popular cuss and I felt pretty chesty."

"They barked up the wrong tree that time, Billy."

"I stayed over of course and went up to the gymnasium. I guess all the clerks in town were there. I borrowed a gymnasium suit, and we went at it. I followed them on the parallel bars and the trapeze and horizontal bar and all the rest, and then I showed them a few stunts that they didn't know anything about. You see, when a fellow has put in a year down here in Bowden's Institute, why——"

"Oh, sure, Billy, we all know you're a star. What about the gloves?"

"Well, they asked me if I could box and I said, 'Yes, a little,' and a fellow named Murphy put on the gloves with me. He was a husky

OF BILLY THOMAS

guy and gamy enough, too, but after I felt him out a little I saw that he didn't know so very much about boxing. He was one of these maulers that go in on main strength and it was easy to block him, so I began to jam in on him and it wasn't long before I got him going and he kept backing and covering up. He wouldn't stay only one round. By that time things got exciting and they all called for Sid. Harrington to put on the gloves. That fellow Harrington was an athlete all right. He showed that when we were doing the gymnastics. I guess he never had any trouble bowling over anybody in that gym. with the gloves. Of course those fellows were all sure that Harrington would get my goat, and he didn't seem to have any doubt about it himself. He was well built and quick and weighed about eight pounds more than I do, but you bet I was just as ready to go to it as he was. You know when a fellow comes from the city he thinks he can show things to a guy out in the country, and besides I was on to all of Bowden's tricks, and you take it from me——"

"Aw, ring the gong, Billy! Start the first round!"

"Before we had been at it half a minute," continued Billy, "I found out that Harrington

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

had a wallop. I was a little over-confident and he caught me on the jaw with a stiff punch that made me see stars. I had to stall a little, and you ought to have heard those fellows yell. They thought he had me going. I spent nearly all of that round blocking his punches and feeling him out; but I saw that he wasn't any too good on the defense, and when we started the second round I made a rush and bored right into him. I got to him with a right and left before he knew what struck him and before the round was half over I caught him on the point of the jaw with an upper cut and sent him to the floor. He got up all right, but he lost his head and began to swing wild. I kept jabbing them in till I got him going in great shape. When the round ended I had him backing all over the ring.

"When we started the third round he had got his head again and his confidence, too. 'Is this for a knockout, Thomas?' he asked. 'Sure it is, if I can put it over,' I said. 'All right,' said he, 'a knockout goes.' And say, that was a round for your life. We both got in some bully good wallops, but I got to him a little oftener than he did to me, and when the round ended I had him over against the ropes covering up to beat the band. We had agreed to

OF BILLY THOMAS

box only three rounds, so of course we called it a draw. I believe I'd have got him in one more round, but I was satisfied—I wanted to stand in with him, don't you know. All the same I did my best to knock him out, and he knew it.

“Harrington walked up to the hotel with me and we sat down and had a talk. He was mighty friendly. He told me all about his job, and I told him about mine and we had a good sociable chin-chin. All at once he said, ‘Say, Thomas, that B & B coffee of yours is a mighty good blend, isn't it?’ ‘Best in the market,’ said I. ‘How do you sell it now?’ he asked. I told him twenty-five cents, but that when we got a standing order from a big store like theirs we made it twenty-four. ‘When are you going out?’ said he. I told him at eight o'clock in the morning and he said, ‘Suppose you wait over till the ten o'clock train. We might make a change in coffee, and I'll see if I can fix it up for you. Come over to the store at 8:45.’ You can bet I was there promptly on time, and Harrington had set the pins all up and it was easy to bowl them over. I got a five hundred pound order for B & B coffee, and Harrington promised to work it so we would get a standing order for

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

five or six hundred pounds a month. How was that for a big streak of luck?"

"There isn't any such thing as luck," asserted Morrison. "If you get all the facts you can explain everything on perfectly logical grounds."

"No such thing as luck?" cried Billy. "Why, see here, Morrison, a baseball goes a foot one side and it's a home run; it goes a foot the other side and it's a foul. Isn't that luck? Any baseball man will tell you that half the games go according to the breaks. It's the same way selling goods."

"Take that instance of yours," argued Morrison; "look at all the time you spent in Bowden's Physical Culture Institute. Was that luck?"

"Well, what good would that have been if things hadn't broke just right up at that town? Of course there's such a thing as luck, and I'm a lucky gink, too."

"All right. I've been taking notes on your spiel, Billy. Here they are. To make a successful traveling salesman a man should be:

First. A scientist and classify all the stores in a card index.

Second. A plugger—you never can tell.

OF BILLY THOMAS

Third. An old geezer with gray whiskers
two feet long

Fourth. A clown and parade up and down
Main Street.

Fifth. An athlete, and maul the stuffing out
of the clerks.

"That's only a starter," laughed Billy.
"Wait till I've been out four or five years and
I'll hand you a longer string of pointers than
that. That's why traveling and selling goods
is the greatest business in the world. A man
gets to be a little of everything, and then
some."

"All right for you, Billy; but I'll stick to the
newspaper. I'm going to be city editor some
day. Oh, I'll recognize you when I meet you
on the street. I won't get swelled up"

"You'll never know what you missed by not
selling goods," grinned Billy "But say, Mor-
rison, if you want to use something that will
prolong your life and make your hair curl just
drink B & B coffee. See?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER III

TAKING CHANCES

THE theory of Karl Marx that most of the evil in this world has its origin in economic conditions is probably wide of the truth, nevertheless in the case of the average man the evil of moodiness and melancholy has a pretty intimate connection with the state of his business. It is hard for him to be cheerful and optimistic when his business is going back, especially when that condition threatens to become chronic. Nor is this altogether a matter of bread and butter and clothes. There is a popular delusion that the bread and butter question is the chief problem of life, but there are others. The problem of pride and prestige is quite as serious. That bread and butter problem is not so fearfully momentous when you come to think about it. Horace Fletcher has demonstrated that a man can get all the nutrition he needs at a cost of about twelve cents a day, and as for clothes, if a man will

OF BILLY THOMAS

watch for his chance he can get a very decent suit for eleven dollars and ninety-eight cents, or along about that. But when a man has gained a certain degree of prestige in his community and then begins to lose it, the mere fact that he has plenty of bread and butter and clothes offers a poor consolation.

John Farnsworth was sitting in his store indulging in an old-fashioned fit of the blues. Please notice that John was sitting. One way to get rid of a fit of blues is to work it off. One can seldom sit it off or meditate it away, but John was sitting and meditating. Furthermore, he had just struck bottom. There is always a subterranean level in the blues where the situation looks blackest. We have a historic instance of that in the case of Elijah under the juniper tree. Elijah was sitting, too, come to think. However, in his case there were strong mitigating circumstances. His life was in danger and he had nothing to eat. John Farnsworth's life was not in danger and he had plenty to eat, and yet in the matter of Stygian gloom John was running Elijah a pretty close second.

Enter now Billy Thomas, the traveling representative of the Boyd & Bidwell Coffee & Spice Mills. He took in the situation at a

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

glance. Billy was no stranger to the blues. Years ago he had sometimes indulged in them himself, but since the beginning of his business career when he had won the fight with himself by fighting Connelly, courage and optimism had been a large part of his personal assets, and these had grown in him by exercise. Now at the age of twenty-five he had been nearly four years a full-fledged salesman and among the boys on the road he was known as a cheerful Johnny-on-the-spot. A real case of the blues simply served to stimulate his hearty aggressiveness, and in John Farnsworth he encountered a clear case. A fit of the blues—the real thing—creates an atmosphere. There are microbes of melancholy, almost tangible, that radiate from a person who is feeling blue. A gloomy man can sit in a corner and fill a whole room with them without saying a word.

Billy proceeded at once to cheer John up—that is, he tried to do it. He called attention to the weather, which was fine, and John admitted it, but it didn't seem to affect him. Billy asked after the family. They were all well, and that should have made John cheerful, but it did not. Billy then told a story about an Irishman; it was a good story, too, but it failed to get a rise of merriment out of John. He was

OF BILLY THOMAS

too far gone. Failing in these attempts, Billy proceeded to business, and he had no difficulty in getting an order, as Farnsworth was a steady customer, but the order was a small one.

"Your orders aren't as large this year as they were last," suggested Billy.

"You bet they aren't, and they wasn't as large last year as the year before," responded John moodily.

"What's the matter anyway, John?" asked Billy. "Business conditions generally have been pretty good."

"That's just it," replied Farnsworth bitterly, "and yet my business has been gradually running down. See here, Billy, I am going to tell you a few things. I am considered a prosperous citizen up in this neck of the woods and, by cracky, that's what I am. I started in here twenty years ago with only five hundred dollars, and I built up a good-paying business. I own a farm of one hundred and eighty acres three miles out of town, and it's worth a hundred dollars an acre, and these store buildings and my residence are worth ten thousand dollars, and I don't owe a cent. I made it all in this store. Don't that show that I'm a business man all right?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Sure, that's a corking good showing, John," agreed Billy.

"I handle the same kind of goods and give people the worth of their money the same as I always did," continued Farnsworth, "but my business has slumped off forty per cent. in the last three years, and people are beginning to talk about it. Those young whipper-snappers, Morgan & Bradley, over at Oak Ridge, are drawing a lot of trade away from us, and it beats all how many people are buying from those Chicago mail order houses. Why, even my best friends are beginning to trade somewhere else. Just this morning Sam Jarvis drove past here with butter tubs and egg cases in his wagon. He was going over to Morgan & Bradley's all right. He turned his face the other way when he drove past. I've got a good notion to sell this business and move out on the farm."

"You wouldn't be satisfied," asserted Billy. "It would be too lonesome and slow out there."

"There is another thing that is bothering me to-day, Billy. I got a letter yesterday from my little girl. I guess we've told you about Lottie. She's in college, you know—one of those big Eastern colleges. She graduates next year and, by cracky, she has made good, too;

OF BILLY THOMAS

she's right up in front with the best of them. Say, did I ever show you her picture?" and Farnsworth stepped back to his desk and took out a photograph.

Billy gazed at it interestedly. As a matter of fact he had seen it once before.

"Yes, I saw it when I was at your house last trip. She's a classy girl all right."

"That's what she is, she is taking honors in scholarship, and she is on the college tennis team and she writes articles for the college magazine. Here is one of her stories," and Farnsworth took a college periodical from his desk and handed it to Billy. "But I was going to say," continued he, "I got a letter from her yesterday, and she is beginning to plan what she will do after she gets out of college, and she hinted about some positions that college girls are getting in New York and Boston, and I'm blamed if she isn't getting it into her head to take some kind of a job in one of them big Eastern cities, and you see what that means—I'm losing my little girl as well as my business. But I didn't intend to tell you all that, Billy. I just wanted to tell you about the business. You travel around the country a good deal and you might give me some points."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Billy was pacing the floor—his hands thrust into his pockets.

"Yes," said he, "I've been thinking about your business. Do you want me to tell you just what I think?"

"Certainly, spit 'er right out, Billy. That's what I am after."

"All right I'll give it to you straight. It's like this: You are doing business just the same way you did ten years ago. But things have changed. It used to be that, if a man carried a good stock and made his prices right, people would come after the goods. It isn't that way now. Competition is too sharp. The merchants have got to go after the people. That's what these big mail order houses do. They go after people right where they live. They keep sending out catalogues and price lists to a fare-ye-well. Live merchants everywhere are doing the same thing. They advertise and push——"

"But see here, Billy, how is a country merchant going to advertise? People in the country wouldn't notice the papers."

"Sure not, but he can advertise with printed dodgers and by making improvements in his business. People in the country notice and talk about every change that is going on, but you

OF BILLY THOMAS

don't give them any chance. Take that old showcase there; how long have you had it?"

"About eight years, I guess."

"Sure, and it doesn't begin to show up your fancy goods and notions. That show window in front is too small to be any good. You keep a good stock, but most of it is in the back room where people can't see it. Morgan & Bradley don't carry as good a stock as you, but their store looks as if they had three times as much. People like to see plenty of stuff. You ought to have twice as big a building. It pays to put up a front and make the impression that your business is growing. People boost a man when he is going ahead, but they knock him when he is dropping behind. Another thing, John, you don't run any special sales. Everybody likes bargains occasionally. It's a mighty good stunt to have certain days when you sell some staple at cost—sugar or soap or canned goods or——"

"Yes, and they would come in and buy that article and nothing else."

"Sure, but that would get them to coming to your store. Going to a certain store is a habit, see?"

"I am an old-fashioned merchant, Billy. I am behind the times," said Farnsworth sadly.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Here is the whole thing in a nutshell," asserted Billy. "A merchant must have the goods, give a square deal, make a show and a big racket and go after the people. That's the modern way of doing."

"I guess I am too old to try new schemes like that. I am fifty-six."

"Nit, you've got twenty good years ahead of you and, believe me, you have the best location here of any country store I know. Everybody knows you, and you have a reputation for square dealing, and your credit is sound. You ought to be doing a big department store business right here. Why, it's a cinch."

"Oh, I would have to make myself all over. I couldn't make it work, Billy. My habits of doing things are fixed. I guess I'll have to plug along in the old way and let things take their course."

"How is this for a scheme, John? I have got about five thousand dollars loose, and I want to put it into a good business. Why not organize a corporation—The John Farnsworth Co.—and issue stock based on a fair valuation of your goods and buildings and let me take five thousand dollars of stock. I wouldn't want a better investment."

OF BILLY THOMAS

"But it would be the same old story. I would have to run the business and——"

"Wait a minute. My territory is in such shape that I could easily drop around and spend one day of the week here. Now, I know a young fellow—his name is Keefer—he clerks in a general store and gets about sixty dollars a month. He is a corking good clerk—a hustler and full of ideas. He is the best buyer I know. He has saved up a thousand dollars and wants to get into some place where he will have a better show. Why not let him take a thousand dollars of stock and pay him, say, seventy dollars a month. I believe that you and I and Keefer could start something. Of course, I am just throwing this out as a suggestion. We might not want to do it after thinking it over. I will be back here again in two weeks and meanwhile I will see Keefer about it. But say!" cried Billy, as he shook hands good-by, "The John Farnsworth Co.! That sounds kind of nifty to me."

On the train that afternoon as Billy carefully considered the scheme, it looked increasingly good. "If we could get Keefer into it, I believe the thing would go," he mused. "I'll give him an earful of talk when I see him next week." He drew from his pocket the college

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

periodical and turned to the article by Lottie Farnsworth. It was a quaint and lightly written sketch telling about the experiences of a little schoolgirl. It contained one or two pathetic touches that got hold of Billy. "Gee," he muttered, "she must be the class all right. I'd like to see her—no, I wouldn't either; she'd get my goat."

A week later Billy and his friend, Joe Keefer, were seated in a room at the hotel discussing the Farnsworth project.

"Yes, it looks pretty good," admitted Keefer, after Billy had laid the matter before him, "but you know, Billy, I'm kind of stuck on the idea of starting a store of my own some day. I want to be my own boss."

"That's all right, Joe, but a man has got to have the capital. What could you do with only a thousand dollars, or suppose you could borrow, say, two thousand more, where would you get off at? You couldn't get anywhere at all with a stock of less than six thousand. You'd be up against it all the time for money. Farnsworth has got capital, and I have five thousand that I could put in. We could discount all our bills. And here's another thing, Joe: I've got some selling schemes for a country store that I am going to pull off some day

OF BILLY THOMAS

—regular commercial traveler stunts right out in the country. Believe me, the thing can be done. Now put Farnsworth's credit and reputation back of us and you look after the buying, and you and I work out some selling schemes, why, say, we could start something down there. The situation is wide open."

Keefer sprang to his feet. "I guess you're right, Billy!" he cried. "If you can put the thing through I believe I'll go into it with you."

When Billy returned the following week and interviewed John Farnsworth again, he had a plan worked out, and as a result of his negotiation there occurred a reorganization of John Farnsworth's business. A corporation was organized called "The John Farnsworth Co.," of which Mr. Farnsworth was president, and Billy Thomas and Joe Keefer were officers and stockholders.

Let the reader now take a mental hop-skip-and-jump and hurdle over an intervening period of eight months. An animated discussion was taking place one evening between the officers of the John Farnsworth Co. They were considering a radical and somewhat expensive innovation concerning which there was a difference of opinion. Billy Thomas was advocating it; John Farnsworth was sitting on the lid; Joe

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Keefer was temporarily upon the fence. In business combinations, as well as in politics and theology, there are always the stand-patter and the progressive arguing the matter out. It isn't a bad thing for business either. The union of centripetal and centrifugal forces holds the earth in poise, and what is good for the earth ought to be good for a country store. In this case the subject of discussion was the buying of a company automobile—not a car exactly, but a rebuilt machine especially constructed for the business. Billy had gotten plans and quotations. It would cost about nine hundred dollars.

"But see here, Billy," objected John; "just look at the expensive improvements that we have made in eight months. There is that new addition to the building that cost us eighteen hundred dollars, and there are all those inside fixings and improvements that cost over seven hundred dollars, and we have put in about two thousand dollars more goods and now we have hired that girl clerk for the dry goods department—why we've spent about forty-five hundred dollars. We ought to slow up a little."

"Sure, we've been handing out the money," admitted Billy, "but it has paid. The business has already increased about forty per cent. A thing is right, John, if it works." In which

OF BILLY THOMAS

statement Billy was probably more strongly fortified in pragmatic philosophy than he imagined.

"What gets me is where you expect to make the money back with an automobile," said John in perplexity. "It looks like extravagance to me."

"Why, take the advertising feature of it alone, John; it would be the biggest kind of an ad. We would have 'John Farnsworth Co.' painted on the sides. I know a cigar man who travels in an auto, and has his special brand of cigars painted on the sides. He runs an ad. for his cigars fifty miles long every day. He gets the business, too. It pays to put up a front. Just see how these big department stores hit 'er up in the daily papers. They've got Phineas T. Barnum looking like a Sister of Charity. Take Beeman, the pepsin gum man—look at that row of bald heads on all the billboards, and believe me, it sells the gum. It pays to make a noise no matter what line you're in. There is Billy Sunday, the evangelist. He used to play centerfield on the Chicago team, you know. He was a corking good ball player, too. He quit baseball and went into the evangelist business. When Billy is going to a town to hold meetings he makes them build a big

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

wigwam to hold several thousand people, and that's a good ad. to start in with, and say, did you ever hear him preach? Talk about slang! Why I'm only a piker beside of him. Slang is his way of advertising, and he puts it over all right. It draws the crowds and gets the money, too. Why, when Billy Sunday leaves a town he carries away a whole suitcase full of mazuma. Sure, it pays to advertise."

"Do you think Billy Sunday is in it for the money?" asked Joe.

"Not on your life! He is in it because he's got religion and he wants everybody else to have it. He's a scrapper, too, and likes to fight the devil, and, believe me, when Billy Sunday comes to town the saloons get a stomach punch that they never forget. Of course he takes all the money that people give him—he'd be a curious gink if he didn't do that, but so long as they don't kick, I don't see why we should. But the point I'm making about Billy is that he always starts something—advertises, see? Here's another thing about a machine: We can have it built so we can carry quite a stock of goods inside, and we can take goods right out to the people. But the biggest advantage about it is that it would help us get at the people better than any other way, and

OF BILLY THOMAS

you take it from me, we could put a crimp into these mail order houses."

"How?" asked John curiously. "If I thought an auto would help us buck them mail order houses, I would go in for it body and breeches."

"Why, it's like this: These mail order houses get to the people with their catalogues, and people read them. But I'd like to see a catalogue that you can't chase under cover when you can see a man and talk with him. These mail order people have had things all their own way. Nobody has talked up the other side. Believe me, a catalogue can't stand up before a game of talk when you've got the goods and prices, and that's what we've got. Wholesale houses have tried that catalogue business with the trade. They were going to put the traveling men out of the game. Did they do it? Not on your life! A salesman on the spot has got a catalogue skinned to a finish. That's where an auto comes in. You can cover the ground and get at the people. See?"

"What do you think about it, Joe?" asked Farnsworth.

"Why, it looked pretty expensive to me at first," replied Keefer diplomatically, "but Billy has got a big point there. It would be a pretty

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

good thing to fight those mail order people at their own game."

It was the mail order argument that won John over. In due time the machine was purchased and put into commission. However, it was with considerable misgiving and heaviness of spirit that John remitted the check for nine hundred dollars.

Billy immediately began to employ what little time he had at his disposal, taking trips out into the surrounding community in the machine. While he was away covering his regular territory for the Boyd & Bidwell people Keefer would take up two or three auto trips each week. They took a business census of the farmers within a radius of eight or ten miles, and cultivated the personal acquaintance of the farmers and their families. They carried a supply of staples in the machine and sold goods from house to house, and scattered weekly circulars which they were issuing. They also prepared a farmer's mailing list for the circulars. Billy and Joe frequently conferred together, devising new ways of making the machine useful in the business.

On the day that Lottie Farnsworth reached home after her graduation it so happened that

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

a valise in his hand. "I brought a sample case along," he smiled as Lottie ushered him into the sitting room; "some things here about the business that I thought would interest you."

"That's good," she replied. "There has been such a change in Daddy as well as in the store—I am curious to know how you did it."

Billy needed no further encouragement. He launched enthusiastically into the subject. "The main idea—what we are aiming at," cried he, "is a big country department store, and I'll show you why I think it will be a go. Here is a town of a thousand people right in the middle of the best farming section of the state and your father's store was the principal one in the town, but the business was running down——"

"Yes, I know," she interrupted, "and when I was at home last year Daddy was blue and discouraged. I felt awfully despondent about it."

"Sure, people were talking about it. They said that Farnsworth had made his pile and didn't care about business any more. But I was going to say, there isn't a better location anywhere for a first-class business. See here," and he produced from the valise a map which he had prepared showing all the roads running into town and all the farms within a radius of

OF BILLY THOMAS

ten miles. He also took out a pack of index cards. "We have taken a kind of census of all these farmers," said he, "and put the facts on these cards, and, believe me, nobody can study that map and these cards without seeing that a corking big business ought to be done in this community. The people are here and they use the stuff. The question was how to get at them. The first thing we did was to go in for improvements and make more room. We built that new addition and cut that big archway through the wall and arranged the stock in departments. You see, it pays to put up a front. Everybody likes success. It makes people root for you, see?"

"But appearances must have reality back of them," said she.

"Oh, sure. You can't run very far on hot air. But all the same, if a man gets the idea of success into his cocoanut and acts as if he had a cinch on it, why, that has got a whole lot to do with putting it over. Of course he must deliver the goods, but he must make a noise about it, too—especially in the retail game. Then we bought that automobile, and everybody rubbernecked at that. People like to have you go after them, too, and it helps boom the special sales." Billy then described

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

in detail the special sales which they were holding each Saturday and especially the B & B coffee sale to be held the following week. "Say, wouldn't you like to help make and serve that coffee—we are going to demonstrate it, you know? 'B & B coffee made and served by a college graduate!' Now, that's what I call class!" and he burst into a hearty laugh. "You know those percolators are great stuff——"

"Yes, I took some work in domestic science and that drip process is interesting," admitted Lottie laughingly.

"Sure it is, and you could give them a little spiel about the science of it and have some fun."

"I am going to take the auto up into the Cornish neighborhood to-morrow, John," said Billy one day after the machine had been in operation about three months; "don't you want to go along?"

"Why, yes, I guess I can."

As they pulled out from the village next morning they were discussing a special sale of sugar to be held the following Saturday.

"Those special sales are getting the people to coming all right," said Billy; "they will all want some of that sugar."

OF BILLY THOMAS

"It looks like a good deal of work for no profit," replied John, "but we sold a lot of stuff besides those canned goods last Saturday, didn't we?"

"Sure. People always find that they want something else when they see it. We must have a special sale of B & B coffee before long, and give a demonstration how to make coffee in a percolator. Those percolators have got coffee pots skinned a mile. Wait a minute," and he stopped the machine. "I want to give Fischer a little holler."

"Wie gehts, landsman?" called Billy, as Mr. Fischer stopped his team.

"Gans gut," replied Fischer with a grin. "Wie gehts by dier?"

"Ziemlich," responded Billy. "Say, you better come down Saturday and get some of this sugar," and he handed Mr. Fischer a printed dodger, which read as follows:

"SUGAR AT COST

"On Saturday, May 28, the John Farnsworth Co. will sell 22 pounds of granulated sugar for \$1.00. This is for one day only. Buy all you wish.

"FINE OVERALLS CHEAP

"We have just got in the finest line of overalls ever shown here. They are extra heavy

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

and reinforced throughout. They will wear like iron, and we are selling them at only 70 cents a pair. This is the price usually charged for a lighter inferior quality. Get a pair while they last.

"THE JOHN FARNSWORTH CO."

"One advantage of that circular over a catalogue," said Billy as he climbed back into the auto, "is that it draws attention to only a couple of articles, and one of them selling at cost. They're sure to read it all. Isn't that the Norton family coming? I want to see Mrs. Norton a minute," and he halted the machine again.

"Good morning," saluted Billy; "I want to make you a present of this cook book, Mrs. Norton. It would cost you seventy-five cents to buy one as good as that. It's full of corking good recipes, but if you want to get the best results you will have to use B & B goods. And here is another present." Billy reached inside the auto and took out a bundle of packages. "Here is about sixty cents' worth of B & B coffee, and cocoa and baking powder and extracts, with our compliments. All I ask is for you to try them. You will want B & B goods after that."

Mrs. Norton thanked him. "I will try them and let you know what I think," said she.

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy also handed them some dodgers.

"How long do you suppose Boyd & Bidwell will keep on letting us have those cook books and samples free?" asked John as they resumed their way.

"As long as we want, I guess," replied Billy. "I've got a pull there, but it's a mighty good ad. for their goods, too. I talked it over with Mr. Boyd and he said to go ahead and flood the community with them. You know nearly every recipe in the book calls for B & B goods. People bite at free samples. It makes them feel as good to get a dollar's worth of stuff for nothing as to get five dollars that they earn."

Billy halted in front of a schoolhouse. "Come here, kid," he called to a boy who was standing near the fence. "Do you want to earn ten cents?"

"Yep," replied the boy eagerly.

"How many scholars are there in this school?"

"About forty-five."

"I will give you ten cents if you will hand each of them one of these circulars to take home to their folks."

"All right."

Billy handed the boy a number of the dodgers, and also a dime. "Say, here are five pen-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

nies more. Now you hire five boys at a penny apiece to help you hand them around. Give me a square deal now and I'll give you another job some time. See?"

"You bet," responded the boy.

"Who lives at this place?" asked Billy as they approached the next farmhouse.

"Do you remember that fat man that was sitting on the fence near the store one day that you told a story about a Norwegian and it tickled him so he almost fell off the fence?"

"Sure, does he live here?"

"Yes—Chauncy Whittaker—that's him over there near the barn."

"Hello, Chauncy!" called Billy. "How's tricks?"

"Pretty good," grunted Chauncy. "How's that Norwegian—haw, haw!"

Chauncy was not exactly prepossessing. He had a large wad of tobacco in his cheek. His whiskers were liberally streaked with tobacco juice.

"That Norwegian is up and coming," replied Billy. "Say, Chauncy, here is a circular you want to read. You better get some of that sugar."

"You bet," said Chauncy as he glanced over

OF BILLY THOMAS

the circular. "Does that Norwegian wear some of these overalls?"

"Sure thing," laughed Billy, "and so will you when you see them. Is Mrs. Whittaker inside?"

"Yes, you'll find her in the kitchen."

Billy went into the house and presently emerged with Mrs. Whittaker, who purchased some of the goods which they had brought along in the automobile.

"This auto is productive of sociability," remarked Billy, as they moved up the road. "When it comes to selling stuff, why, mixing is pretty near half of it. If a man wants to enjoy life and get the business, he had better go to it and mix with folks. It's great sport."

"Pretty ornery sport mixing with Chauncy at close range," suggested John with a grin.

"Oh, well, everybody has got some good point, and Chauncy laughs at my jokes. You know you always like a fellow that laughs at your jokes. I guess he is buying most of his chewing tobacco and groceries now at our store."

About noontime as they were nearing a fine well-kept farm, Farnsworth called attention to it. "Jim Cornish is one of the hardest working men in this township, and his farm shows it,

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

doesn't it? He buys from those mail order houses. He has got a big family and has money in the bank, but say—talk about tight-fisted!"

"I guess this is where we get our dinner," said Billy, as he turned the machine into the yard.

"I don't know about that. Dinner costs money."

"Oh, they will probably invite us when we go in."

While they were eating dinner, Billy drew from Mr. Cornish the story of his successful career as a hired man and farmer. He then volunteered the facts concerning his own advancement from office clerk at The Boyd & Bidwell Company up to his present position of commercial traveler and merchant. He grew enthusiastic in describing the business of The John Farnsworth Co. "You see, Mr. Cornish, it was a big thing for Keefer and me to get in with a man like Mr. Farnsworth here."

"If John wasn't setting right here," asserted Cornish, "I would tell you that he is as solid as the bank, and his word is as good as a bond."

Farnsworth smiled complacently, serene in the consciousness that all these things were true.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"That's it, and we discount all our bills, and that helps us to lower prices, doesn't it, John?"

"Yes, we are going to save about five hundred dollars a year in discounts alone," assented John.

"You ought to get acquainted with Keefer, Mr. Cornish," continued Billy; "you would be interested in him. He is one of the busiest chaps you ever saw. He gets up at five o'clock in the morning, and doesn't go to bed till ten, and he's always on the job. No matter what a man goes at, if he means to get ahead, he must hustle. Hard work is the biggest part of the game. Isn't that so?"

"You're right!" cried Cornish, glancing triumphantly at his boys. "Hard work is the whole thing."

"Keefer is one of the best buyers I ever met," resumed Billy. "You see he is one of these scrappy, red-headed galoos that is always nosing into things and getting at the facts. Every evening you will find him studying goods and markets. When I first met him he was the buyer in a big general store over at Plattville, and I found right away that I was up against a first-class buyer. Why, that boy could buy goods off me as cheap as I could sell them to myself, and that's going some. He knows

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

all about goods—where they are made—what it cost to put them up—the whole business. When you try to sell that kind of a man, why, you've got to hand him inside prices or there's nothing doing. You see, Mr. Cornish, when a man is buying for a first-class country store that pays cash, why, he can get just as low prices as these big city stores can, if he knows his business. For instance, take one article that we are making a run on just now—overalls. Keefer got down to the bottom of the overall business. He knows how to test cloth, and just how the best overalls are made, and he bought them from the manufacturer at rock-bottom prices. The result is that we are able to sell a heavy reenforced overall at seventy cents, the same price that these mail order houses charge for lighter ones. That's the advantage of having a buyer like Keefer. That's why we are getting the overall business of this community. See?"

After dinner Billy presented Mrs. Cornish with a cook book and an assortment of B & B goods. He also handed them a number of dodgers.

"I'll bet you the cigars," said Billy as they moved out of the yard, "that those people will be down to our store Saturday. Cornish isn't

OF BILLY THOMAS

going to pass up a chance to get sugar at cost, and that spiel about overalls got under his hide, don't you think?"

"Yes, he listened pretty good," admitted John, "but why didn't you say more about the mail order houses, Billy?"

"Why, we're not quite ready to start that campaign yet. We want to get a stand-in first, and locate the particular people to go after—the leaders, you know, and then specialize on it. I'm getting some facts for men like Cornish to mull over. When a farm is located near a thrifty town the land brings a higher price, but when these mail order houses put a country town on the blink, why, it knocks the price of farm land all around it. I am getting facts to prove it. That will be a hard nut for Cornish to crack. We'll get after that in a few weeks."

On the Saturday night following their auto trip after the store was closed for the day, Farnsworth, Billy and Joe were sitting down at the scene of the day's activities surveying the results.

"I guess we're entitled to smoke a good ten-cent cigar to-night, boys," said John, "that B & B brand, eh, Billy?"

"That's what," agreed Billy. "Say, Joe, how much sugar did we unload to-day?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Five barrels," replied Joe, who had been checking over the sales book, "but let's talk about something that we made a profit on. We sold eighty-four pair of overalls to-day and about a hundred and ten dollars' worth of B & B goods, and over two hundred and eighty dollars' worth of other stuff. How's that, John?"

"Mighty good," admitted John.

"Did you notice that Jim Cornish and his wife were in the store to-day, John?" asked Billy.

"Yes—he bought a lot of that sugar, didn't he?"

"Sure, but he bought four pair of overalls, too, and Mrs. Cornish bought some B & B goods. We are going to get that family to coming just like the Nortons. When you and I were out that day, John, we called on twelve families who weren't customers, didn't we? Well, eight of them came to the store to-day and bought some stuff."

Farnsworth was tilting back in his chair, his feet resting upon the top of a sugar barrel. He was complacently blowing rings of smoke up into the air. "I tell you what it is, boys," said he; "that automobile is all right."

OF BILLY THOMAS

Over beyond the village was a lane leading down into the wood along which there flowed a small but active stream. This lane had always been Lottie's favorite place for a Sunday afternoon stroll. On her first Sunday at home as she was making her way leisurely down the lane and halting every now and then to survey the adjoining meadows or glance at some angle of the stream that was suggestive of the experiences of her childhood, it seemed to her that the country had never been so beautiful. At the same time she felt a pang of regret. "Why is it," she sighed, "that one cannot live among such surroundings and still do a work in the world?"

Just then Billy Thomas entered the lower end of the lane and came in her direction.

"Won't you turn back and take another walk in the wood?" she asked.

"Sure," he responded quickly; "I never get too much of it. I like the country. Don't you?"

"Yes. I saw you at church this morning. Don't you think that Mr. Morland is an interesting speaker?"

"That's what! He's a good baseball player, too. He throws a mighty sharp curve. He's the kind of an all-around fellow that I like."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Probably he won't remain very long in this village," said she. "The city churches will get him away."

"Yes, that's the ideal!" exclaimed Billy indignantly. "The city always draws the best of everything away from the country. It will be different some day. The country will draw from the city. You take it from me, the city people are beginning to wake up to the fact that the country has got it all over the city—for living purposes, see?"

"You don't think, do you, that the country church offers a young man like Mr. Morland any such opportunity as a city church does?"

"Why, sure it does. Morland and I have had some great talks about that. You see he came here about the same time I did. Of course I'm not butting in with any advice about how to run a church. That's out of my line. But Morland is always pumping questions into me. He is interested in what we are doing at the store. I told him one day that if he would adopt the same methods I bet he could get the same results in the church. It looks to me as if the trouble with most country churches is the same as with country stores. They don't go after the people and they don't give them

OF BILLY THOMAS

the kind of goods they want and they don't make enough noise."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the girl, puzzled

"Well, it's like this: Just look at those small congregations in your church, and it's the leading church in town, too—only about seventy people there this morning. There ought to be two hundred and fifty. You've got to have something besides hymns and sermons to bring them in."

"What, for instance?"

"Why, the people in the country don't live right. They don't have living conveniences in their houses. The life is too hard for the women. The people don't have social recreation enough. The young fellows and girls get tired of that kind of life and skip off into the cities. Now, suppose that your church should put out a line of goods that naturally interest people. Supposing they should organize a singing club with free instruction and start a chorus choir and put two or three fiddles and a cornet and cello into it for Sunday nights. Supposing they should organize an athletic club and fit up that room over the town hall for basket ball and gymnasium work. Supposing a course of popular lectures should be started and have

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

professors from the Agricultural College here and concerts and lectures on domestic science stuff? Wouldn't the church draw bigger crowds? Sure it would. Morland says he is going in for it, too, and it's dollars to doughnuts that he will make a go of it."

After Billy had left town upon his regular two weeks' trip, Lottie Farnsworth discovered that the days were actually lonely. She had regarded Billy (so she supposed) with nothing more than an amused interest—he being an uneducated man—but in spite of that she caught herself looking forward eagerly to his re-appearance.

Upon Billy's return he was full of enthusiasm over a plan for a special sale of B & B baking powder for the following Saturday.

"Billy has written up a great circular about baking powder," said Mr. Farnsworth at the supper table.

"Yes, I dare say," responded Lottie. "Anything with the B & B brand upon it is perfectly wonderful."

"He says he is going to ask you to make some biscuits with it; would you like to try?"

"Perhaps. We had great fun at that coffee sale."

The following afternoon as Lottie was

OF BILLY THOMAS

standing at the lower end of the store, she heard a voice that suddenly paralyzed her with fright. It was the savage rasping voice of Ham Jordan upon a drunken spree. Jordan was a big powerful fellow, and when sober, a fairly decent citizen, but when drunk he was an ugly, quarrelsome fighter. He had periodically terrorized the village as far back as Lottie could remember. He was just now talking insolently to her father near the front door.

"Who is it, John Farnsworth, that pays for all this style you're putting on? Who pays for that automobile and all these fancy fixings? I'll tell you who does—it's us fellers that work and sweat and earn the money. That's who pays for it. It's time somebody showed you what's what. You need to be took down a peg, and I'm the feller that kin do it, and don't you forget it."

"Now, see here, Ham," said Mr. Farnsworth in a conciliatory tone, "you——"

"Don't Ham me!" cried Jordan angrily. "Don't palaver around me! I kin mop this floor with you quicker'n you could bat an eye, and I got a cussed good mind to do it right now!"

Just then Billy Thomas, who had been listening near the archway, stepped quickly up

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

from behind and touched Jordan upon the shoulder. He wheeled around and glared at Billy. They stood for an instant confronting each other. Billy said something in a low tone. Lottie could not hear what he said, but a moment later Jordan quietly turned and walked out to his wagon, and climbing in he drove up the road.

"Daddy dear, I'm just crazy to know what Billy said to Ham Jordan!" exclaimed Lottie when her father came in to supper.

"Why, all he said to him was this: He said, 'Now, that will be about all from you, Ham. I want you to get into that wagon and go home,' and blamed if Ham didn't do it."

"Why, how strange! That is what Prof. Mosely would call a study in psychology."

"It would have been a study in something else if Ham had laid a hand on him. That was the first time I was ever sorry that Jordan didn't strike a fellow."

"Why, daddy! You wouldn't want him to assault Billy?"

"Yes, I would. It's time that some one gave Ham Jordan a trouncing."

"Do you think that Billy could do it?" she asked.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Think! I know he could, and I guess that Ham thought so, too "

"Ugh, I was frightened!" said she with a shudder. "He used to terrify me so when I was a child. I never got over it."

As Billy was coming across from the hotel that evening, Lottie met him in the roadway. "I was in the store when Ham Jordan was there," said she. "Weren't you just a little afraid of him, honestly now?"

"If I had been afraid of him I wouldn't want to admit it," he replied. "But no, I wasn't afraid of him. The fact is I was a little disappointed because he didn't sail in."

"Why?"

"For three reasons I guess," said he reflectively. "One was that I heard what he said to your father, and that made me hot. Another was that Ham has been scaring up this town about long enough. He needs a licking. That isn't saying that I could do it, but I wouldn't mind trying."

"What was the third reason?"

"Oh, I guess that two good reasons are enough."

"But I wish you would tell me the third one," persisted she.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Billy's eyes twinkled. "The third one was that I saw you back there in the store."

"Do you think that he was afraid of you?" asked she hastily.

"No—not afraid of getting hurt."

"Then, why did he back down?"

"He knew that he was dead wrong getting on a toot and talking to your father that way."

"Conscience?" suggested Lottie.

"I guess so. Another thing: Ham prides himself on being a holy terror when he's drunk and throwing a scare into people. If he should get licked once it would humiliate him for the rest of his life. Probably he didn't exactly think I could do it, but he saw that I thought I could, and he didn't care to take a chance—I guess that's about the size of it. You see, Lottie——" Billy paused in confusion.

"Oh, never mind that, Billy," said she with a smile. "Everybody calls me Lottie around here, and they all call you Billy. It isn't necessary for us to be so formal. What were you going to say?"

"Why—gee—I guess I've forgot what I was going to say. It's a nice evening. Wouldn't you like to take a walk down Parker's lane?"

"That would be fine. I'll run in and get my jacket."

OF BILLY THOMAS

As they strolled down the lane, Lottie recalled various incidents of her childhood that happened along the brook. "There is where I went in wading barefoot one day and got a blood-sucker on my foot and ran home crying," said she, "and over there I was once crossing on those stones and fell in and got wet all over."

Billy had grown suddenly silent.

"Thinking about that baking powder sale?" she inquired.

"No," he replied, "I was just then thinking about you and business and books."

"An interesting combination surely," she rejoined with a smile, "especially business and books."

"Do you know what we are going to do, Lottie?" he cried enthusiastically. "We are going to put up a fine two-story brick building some day—a big square building—and have one of the finest country department stores in the state."

"I don't doubt it," admitted she. "You have made a good start in that direction already."

"And then I've been thinking about books lately," continued he. "I bought some books once about business and salesmanship, and got into quite a habit of studying. I am going in

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

for some study every day. When I started away on this last trip I bought a volume of Emerson's Essays, and I've been putting in about an hour every evening having a collar-and-elbow with Emerson."

Lottie burst into a laugh. "How do you like Emerson, Billy? Do you enjoy him?"

"Well, not as much as a sporting page exactly, but all the same I'm getting along. Take that essay on Self-reliance—I've read that four times. Isn't that great stuff? Do you know, Lottie, I believe that a man can get just about what he wants in the world if he only wants it hard enough and is willing to pay the price."

Billy leaned against the fence and surveyed her with a look of such ardent admiration and masterful enthusiasm that it threw Lottie into confusion.

"It is getting dark," suggested she. "Let's go back."

OF BILLY THOMAS

CHAPTER IV.

WINNING OUT

AFTER returning to the house that evening, Lottie felt restless and uneasy. She went up early to her room, but not for the purpose of retiring. She wished to be alone. She took her seat by the open window, and looked out into the night. It was useless to ignore the fact that Billy Thomas had serious intentions. His whole manner showed plainly enough what was in his mind, and to Lottie's surprise she felt half elated over it—in fact, Billy interested her, and she enjoyed his companionship. And yet he was far from being the kind of man that she had thought to marry if ever she did marry. Her ideal of a husband was first of all an educated man. He must be a college man. This barred Billy at the outset. However, as she mentally compared him with some of the college men whom she had met, he did not seem to suffer much in comparison. He certainly possessed a fine appearance, and he dressed in

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

good taste. Then there was something so dominant and enthusiastic in his nature—he was a manly man! She recalled that moment when he faced Ham Jordan. He really would have whipped Jordan—she felt sure of that. He was successful in his work. He would make his way in the world. But how far? Would he be satisfied to settle in this little town and remain a country merchant all his life? That seemed to be his present ideal, and it was not a very attractive one to Lottie. She looked out into the moonlight across the intervening field into the distant woods. The chirping of the crickets and the monotonous croaking of the frogs came faintly to her ears. These familiar country noises reminded her vividly of her high school days when she had often sat in that same window and dreamed about going East to college and fitting herself for a wider and larger life than this little town could offer. And now could she ever be satisfied to stay here and be the wife of a country merchant? What a slangy fellow Billy was anyway, and he seemed to think about nothing but business! She wondered if he really had brains enough to think about anything else. She sighed and leaned her head upon her hand in perplexity. Why not accept that position which was offered

OF BILLY THOMAS

her in New York? Why not live in the city and do a work in the world? Other women were doing it. At any rate she simply would not tie herself down for life to this monotonous little town; Billy Thomas need not think that he could dominate her either! With these thoughts in mind, Lottie sought her bed.

In his room over at the hotel Billy was similarly engaged. He was not sitting at the window—he was walking the floor and puffing nervously at a cigar. He had a habit, when unduly excited, of talking to himself. He stepped over to the mirror and looked himself squarely in the eye. "See here, old man," said he; "she's too fine a girl for you! You aren't in her class. She knows more in a minute than you do in a week. She has got it all over you, anyway you take it. You may be something of a man, but beside of her you're nothing but a dub—but hold on now—is there any man on earth that would care more for her than you do? Is there anyone that would work harder or fight harder for her than you would? Not on your life! Just suppose then that she really did care for you, wouldn't you make her happy? Why, sure you would! Go to it, old man! Go to it!"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

With this virtuous resolution in mind he went to his bed.

Billy went away on his next trip without seeking another interview with Lottie. He instinctively felt that it would be better not to precipitate the matter, and it was well that he thought so, for she was in a rebellious mood. He told Mr. Farnsworth that he would be away for thirty days, but at the end of two weeks he suddenly returned.

"Billy has got back," said Mr. Farnsworth at the supper table.

"Has he?" asked Lottie casually, and she wondered if her father could hear the violent beating of her heart.

"Yes. He said that he had bagged some big orders and so he thought that he would take a long jump and see how things are going at the store."

After supper as Lottie was sitting upon the porch, Billy entered the front gate.

"Good evening," called Lottie; "you couldn't stay away from the store a whole month, could you, Billy?"

"No—that store is an attractive proposition," laughed he. "Say, Lottie, this is the finest kind of an evening. Come on out and take a walk."

OF BILLY THOMAS

As they turned into Parker's lane they both grew silent and constrained. Lottie knew very well what was coming. She dreaded to have Billy speak. She felt that she might be compelled to disappoint him, and yet she would have been greatly disappointed had he not spoken. In fact she wanted him to speak—that is, she did not know exactly what she did want.

As for Billy, he knew precisely what he wanted, but how to get at it—there was the rub.

"I sold a big bill of goods to a man last week——" he began.

"Really, Billy, do you ever think of anything besides business?" she interrupted.

"Do I?" he cried. "Well, if you knew all that I've been thinking about the last two weeks, I guess you'd say so."

"What about that man who bought the bill of goods?" she asked hastily.

"Why, his store is in a little town about the size of this, and he has a good business. He asked me over to his house to supper. He has been married only about a year. They live in one of these Queen Anne cottages with a wide veranda and a nice flower garden beside of it, and believe me, Lottie——"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Don't you think it monotonous for a woman to spend her life in a little town like that? I do!" cried Lottie emphatically.

"Why—why—I don't know," replied Billy, somewhat abashed at her impetuosity.

"It is all very well for people who are not capable of being and doing something better," said she, "but if I were a man I would get out into wider opportunities and do larger things."

"Don't you like living in the country, Lottie?"

"Yes, I like it for a change, but it is no place for an ambitious person, Billy. The opportunities are too limited."

"Don't you think that a big country department store offers chances enough for an ambitious man?" he asked.

"No, the environment is too narrow," asserted she.

"Why, say! I have been thinking about that very thing while I was away. I have been wondering if I might not be making a mistake about this store business. You see, Lottie, I can sell goods. I got some crackerjack orders on this trip. The fact is I am putting over some big business every trip I take and——"

"Yes, and you are naturally a salesman,

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy, and doesn't salesmanship offer larger opportunities than country merchandizing?"

"That's what!" he cried. "You see, the selling end is the most important end of any business. These wholesale men and manufacturers will all tell you that the sales force is what makes the business go. It's the men out on the firing line that set the pace, and this selling game is a great old game, too. There isn't any other work just like it. Every time you tackle a man to sell him a bill of goods, why, it is just like playing a game of baseball. And when a fellow knows how to play the game, why, believe me, it's the finest kind of sport, and every time he lands an order he wins a new game, see? Take a man who has a fine line of goods like ours and a first-class house like the Boyd & Bidwell Co., and who is putting over the sales, why, every morning looks good to him and the job looks good and the chances for business are thicker than huckleberries. Honestly, lots of times when I go to bed at night, after a ripping hard day's work, I am in a hurry for morning to come so that I can get out into the push again. That's how this selling game looks to me, Lottie."

Lottie smiled at the glow of Billy's enthusiasm.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Isn't that a good indication that salesmanship is your work, Billy, and isn't it true that good salesmen are often promoted to a responsible position in the company?" she asked.

"Why, sure!" cried he. "Mr. Boyd himself was a traveling salesman once, and you take it from me, what he doesn't know about selling coffee——"

"Then, why is it, Billy," she interrupted, "that you have been planning to leave that work and settle down in a country store?"

"It was like this," he replied. "I started in on that store deal as a kind of investment, and it looked pretty good, and then I met you and I thought that maybe you—that is, that your father might—that is, I——" Billy paused in confusion.

Lottie also felt embarrassed. "Then you really prefer salesmanship yourself, don't you, Billy?"

"Why, sure! There's more money in it and more fun. When a man makes good at it he is sure to have a good income, and eventually he will land a job as sales manager of some good concern, and that is the niftiest kind of a job."

"And yet here you are thinking of throwing over your position," said she in perplexity.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Nit—not unless you say so! I would do either one for you. Say, Lottie, won't you get into the game with me? If you will do that, why I believe I could sell rings around any man that travels over my territory. What do you say, Lottie?"

Lottie's face flushed. She hesitated a moment, and then burst into a hearty laugh. "Yes, Billy," she cried. "We will get into the game together."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER V

GET ON GOOD TERMS WITH YOUR JOB

I AM much obliged, Griffith," said Billy Thomas, as he placed his order book back in his pocket. "Believe me, when a store like this connects up with our line of goods, there's going to be something doing. Well, so long."

"Wait a moment, Billy," said Griffith. "Our sales manager wishes to see you about another matter. I promised to introduce you. He has got a scheme."

"All right, trot him out," and Billy set his sample case back upon the counter. Griffith stepped out, and presently returned accompanied by Mr. Dixon, the sales manager.

"Mr. Dixon, shake hands with Mr. Thomas."

"Glad to meet you, Thomas," greeted Dixon. "I have heard of you. Now I'll come right to the point. We are having a meeting of our sales force once a month and are giving them some addresses. We've had a manufacturer

OF BILLY THOMAS

talk to them, and a merchant, and a sales manager. Now we want a commercial traveler right off the road. We want you to do it. How about it?"

"Why, that is out of my line, Mr. Dixon," protested Billy. "I never made but one speech in my life, and I swore then that I'd never do it again. It made me sweat worse than selling a stock of goods."

"You probably wouldn't sweat so much next time," smiled Dixon; "I dare say you got through it all right."

"Yes, I got by, but I was talking to our salesmen at a banquet, you understand, and I knew all those fellows. They couldn't get my goat the way a crowd of strangers would. But say, I know just the man you want; he is a good salesman and he can hand out a line of talk. I heard him——"

"Never mind about him," interrupted Dixon pleasantly. "I am talking about you just now. We want a man who knows what he is talking about and who has enthusiasm and personality. We want something practical. You can do it all right; you can sell goods."

"Sure, but it's like this: It's one thing to do a job, but when you try to tell how to do it, why, that's something else again, see? Did

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

you ever read the speeches that John D. makes to Sunday schools where he tells them how he made his money? He says he saved his pennies. Wow!" and Billy burst into a roar of laughter. "Talking through his hat, see, and doesn't know it!" he gasped.

"Perhaps John D. isn't so far off, after all," smiled Dixon. "Economy is the keynote of Standard Oil."

"Yes. But just as if John D. made his pile by saving it! Oh, mamma!"

"Well, coming back to our matter: You have ideas and you can talk. I can prove that by Griffith here—and we pay fifty dollars for each address."

"How many clerks are there in the bunch?" asked Billy.

"About twelve hundred."

"Great Scott! That mob would give me cold feet. They would guy me."

"I am willing to take chances on that. You can do it nicely if you look at it right, and our company will appreciate it. Let me know within ten days," and Dixon bade Billy good-by.

Although Billy thought he had decided the matter on the spot, he could not prevent his thoughts from returning to it on his way home. And so of course he mentioned it to his wife—

OF BILLY THOMAS

for Billy was now a man of substance and family, a benedict of over two years' standing. Already he had learned that the greatest fun of business is the sharing of experiences, hopes and even disappointments, with the right kind of sympathetic partner. And Lottie had turned out to be the right kind. So it happened that he repeated to her his talk with Dixon as they sat together that evening, going over the events of the week.

"You see, Lot," he concluded, "when a man goes outside of his specialty he generally makes a show of himself. I can sell goods all right, but when I try to see myself up on a platform—nit!"

"But, Billy, dear," protested his wife, "you have plenty of ideas that would be good for those clerks to think about, and I'm sure you could interest them. A man is always interesting when he talks about something he understands and which interests him. I would do it if I were you."

"Say, Lot, your birthday comes next month, doesn't it?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Oh, nothing; only I'd like to take that fifty dollars and blow it into a birthday present."

"Don't make the engagement on that ac-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

count, dear. Do it because you want to help those clerks see business the way you see it. I am sure that you would give them fifty dollars' worth."

That evening Billy wrote to Mr. Dixon and agreed to deliver an address the following month.

During the next thirty days Billy devoted his spare time to shaping up his address. One problem that caused him perplexity was whether or not he should write it out and commit it to memory. He finally concluded that such would be the safer course. When he returned from his trip, he had quite an accumulation of manuscript in his suitcase, to which he addressed himself studiously that evening.

"You see," he explained, somewhat apologetically, to his wife, "the clerks in these big department stores are a pretty intelligent bunch. They go to theaters and big public meetings, and they know when a thing is done up in style. A man has got to come across with the goods, so I thought I'd write it all out."

"But, Billy, dear," inquired his wife, a little anxiously, "you aren't going to try and deliver a regular lecture, are you?"

"Why not? That's about what it's going to be. They have a big auditorium in the store,

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

just think out a good talk in your own way and let that manuscript go."

"Why, see here, Lot, you have heard of Mark Hanna—Senator Hanna—he used to be a wholesale grocer before he got into politics. He was sixty years old before he ever made a political speech. I was reading about it in the paper the other day. He wrote his first speech all out and committed it to memory, and he made a home run right off the bat. Common talk is one thing, but a speech is a different proposition, see?"

That evening after Billy went downtown his wife looked over his manuscript, and her inspection only served to increase her uneasiness. Upon his return she broached the matter again, but Billy was obdurate.

"It's like this, Lot," said he; "they are paying me fifty dollars for this, and I'm not going to get up there and blow off a lot of hot air. I am going to put fifty dollars' worth of work on that speech, and it's going to be solid stuff. I'll deliver the goods all right; don't you fret."

He did promise her, however, that he would tabulate his points upon a separate sheet of paper and have it upon the table when he should deliver the address.

The night before the meeting Billy entered

OF BILLY THOMAS

his house carrying a large pasteboard box. He opened it and produced a dress suit.

"You see," he explained to his wife, "I have wanted one of these suits for a long time, and I thought it would be the proper caper to rag up a little for that spiel to-morrow night."

"Don't you think," said she, "that you would feel more comfortable if you should wear that nice double-breasted sack coat? You might feel a little awkward in the dress suit, dear, and it might not seem just the appropriate thing to your audience."

"Why, about two-thirds of those clerks are girls, and they will be dolled up to beat the band. Am I going to stand up there looking like a cheap skate? Not on your life! This affair is going to be pulled off strictly according to Hoyle. You watch my smoke."

The following evening, when Billy took his departure, Mrs. Thomas prevailed upon him to take his sack coat along in a suitcase. "You might change your mind," said she, "and then you would be glad to have it."

There were about a thousand employees in the audience. Mr. Dixon, in introducing Billy, paid him a compliment as a successful and prominent commercial traveler; but when Billy, arrayed in his dress suit, stepped up before

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

them and placed his manuscript upon the table, he was obviously ill at ease.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "this subject of salesmanship, to which I invite your consideration this evening, is a very broad and comprehensive subject. In fact, it includes almost every branch of human endeavor. The fundamental principles of salesmanship are of importance not alone to those who are engaged in the busy marts of trade, but also to people engaged in almost every occupation. Emerson has well said, 'To every man his task,' but the salesman has occasion to call into exercise certain principles of conduct and efficiency that are involved in more different tasks than you could shake a stick at."

At this point Billy had intended to make a sweeping gesture. He did make one, but it was somewhat belated and awkward, so much so that a number of salesgirls down near the front began to giggle.

This frustrated Billy, and he forgot his speech.

"As I was about to say——" he continued, trying in vain to recall the connection.

"As I was going to say——" he repeated, but was unable to go on. He stepped over to the table and began nervously to examine his

OF BILLY THOMAS

manuscript. He caught a glimpse of Mr. Dixon, who was regarding him with a surprised and quizzical look

The girls in the audience began to whisper and smile in evident enjoyment over the speaker's embarrassment. Billy's instinct told him that his lecture was going to be a failure, but he had no thought of quitting. His fighting blood was aroused. He took up the manuscript from the table and deliberately tore it into pieces. "Now, if you will excuse me a minute," said he, "I want to do a lightning-change act. I will be back right away." He stepped into the side entrance and, quickly doffing his dress coat, he put on his double-breasted sack and buttoned it up, then, stepping back upon the stage, he thrust his hands into his pockets and surveyed the audience with a broad grin

"Now then, boys and girls," said he, "this is Billy Thomas, the coffee salesman. That fellow in the dress suit was an imitation of somebody else, and a mighty poor one, too. That canned stuff don't go. I am going to give you some straight goods now about salesmanship, see? We will make it informal, too, and if any of you would like to ask any questions, why, just fire them in and I will answer them if I can. Now, what I was trying to say, when I

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

slipped the trolley, was this: Salesmanship is something that everybody ought to know about, no matter what his job is. Lawyers and preachers and doctors and everybody else would do their jobs better if they knew how to sell goods. 'Cause why? Because salesmanship is getting somebody to take your line of goods, and everybody has got his line. The lawyer has got his line of ideas that he is trying to put over on the court and jury. The doctor has his line of stuff that he wants the public to take. The fact is that one-half of society is trying all the time to put over something on the other half, see? Everybody ought to be a salesman when you come to that, and so it's the best kind of training to work in a store. A good many of you girls intend to get married some day—I guess all of you do. Let's find out, just for fun. How many of you would like to get married?—just hold up your hands. Come now, don't be bashful."

A few hands went up, then more, and then nearly the whole audience caught the spirit of the thing and held up their hands.

"That's right," smiled Billy; "nothing like being honest about it. Well, I can't do much for you personally, because I'm a married man myself, but I can give you some good pointers,

OF BILLY THOMAS

and one is this: The best kind of preparation for married life is to be a saleswoman, because in selling goods you learn patience and courtesy and how to manage people; so I want to congratulate you girls because you are selling goods—shake,” and Billy held out his hand and went through the motions of a handshake.

“Now I am going to tell you how to make a good salesman, and I’m not telling you something that I learned out of a book either. I clerked in a store for four years, and I have traveled on the road selling goods for nine years. I’m a modest man, see? But I can sell goods—just stick a pin in that. Listen. The first and most important thing in salesmanship—in fact, it comes pretty near being the whole thing—is to get on good terms with your job. ’Cause why? Because a man will always hump himself for something that he likes, and people like to deal with a man who enjoys his work. It makes them feel good because he feels good, and you take it from me, everybody likes to feel good. Why, I know a fellow—he sells shirts—I buy all my shirts from him—you ought to hear that man talk shirt. There isn’t a thing about a shirt from the collar band to the tail that he don’t know forward and backward, and he’s so interested in it that he makes it look

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

like the biggest job in the world to sell shirts, and next to the biggest thing is to wear one of those shirts. He makes you feel as if a man who hasn't got that kind of a shirt on is like the fellow in the Bible who didn't have a wedding garment—he hasn't got a look in.

"Do you know why so many clerks don't succeed better? It's this: They are on bad terms with their job. They dislike their work. They are always wanting to beat it and go at something else. On the other hand, I can tell you about dozens of clerks"—here Billy gave a number of illustrations arising out of his personal experience and observation where clerks by cultivating a deep interest in their work had reached success in salesmanship.

"Mr. Thomas," interrupted a young man in the audience as he arose to his feet, "you invited us to ask questions."

"Sure, go ahead, shoot."

"Supposing a person is working at something that is naturally distasteful to him, how is he going to get on good terms with his job?"

"That's a fair question," answered Billy. "Now, if a man is working at something that needs to be done—something that society needs, you understand—and that job is distasteful, why, the trouble isn't in the job, it's in his cocoa-

OF BILLY THOMAS

nut—that's where the distaste is. He has got the wrong slant at it. Supposing his job is clerking in a big, first-class store like this. Why, he wants to get into his bean an idea of the dignity of his job. This is a classy institution, and he's a necessary part of it. He wants to consider himself just as classy as the store. Nothing like being chesty over your job. A job is really what you think it is—to you, anyway. But that is only a starter. If a clerk is to get on good terms with his job, he must be a salesman. Stick another pin in that. Every clerk isn't a salesman, not on your life. A salesman is onto his line. He knows his goods; he studies them, and he's interested in them because he knows them. In some ways goods are like people—the more intimate you get the better you like them. I met a fellow the other day who was selling nails. I never knew much about nails. I always thought that a nail was a nail, but it isn't. Some are different. This fellow told me about nails. He talked me to a standstill about how they make wire nails and shingle nails and spikes—he liked nails because he knew them. He made a nail look like a live proposition.

“Another thing. A salesman likes people. He studies them, and is interested in them, be-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

cause he knows them. It's a big thing to get the right slant at people. 'Cause why? Because you are meeting them all day—they are thicker than huckleberries. Now, here's a funny thing. When you stop and think that the most enjoyment we get out of life is in meeting people and getting interested in them (and if you don't believe this, just go off alone where you won't meet any people for three or four days and see where you get off at)—why, isn't it queer that we don't study harder to find ways to get in right with folks at large—just people, you understand? There's a fellow up on my street learning to play a cornet, and, believe me, he toots at it morning and night to a fare-ye-well. I met him on the street and asked him how the horn was coming on. 'Well,' he said, 'it makes my lips swell up, but I'm getting there.' Just suppose that you and I should go to it and practice on people like that. Why, we'd get all kinds of music out of them, and, believe me, it's great sport. It's——"

"But, Mr. Thomas," interrupted a young lady in the audience, "when a clerk has to stand up all day and gets tired and nervous and people act cross and cranky with her, how is she going to get on good terms with the people?"

"Why, if she gets to be a good player," cried

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy, "that is the best kind of a chance to start a tune. I was in a dentist chair a while ago, and you know how it takes the fun out of you when a dentist gets to probing up into the roots of your teeth. Well, I glanced up at the wall and saw a card there that had some good stuff printed on it. It said, '*Smile, darn you, smile.*' I don't go much on slang, but that card got my goat and kept me laughing—that is, as much as a fellow can laugh with one of those rubber gags over his mouth. That card paid my dentist bill and left me a profit besides. It was this way: The dentist charged me twelve dollars for the work. A few days later I went into a store to sell a man who is one of the meanest buyers up along that line. He isn't a customer of mine, but I sell him occasionally. He was having one of his off days, and when I tackled him he uncorked a grouch that was enough to raise the hair, and I came mighty near going back at him. I do that sometimes, but I never made anything at it—a grouch never gets a man anywhere—but all at once I thought of that card, so I let loose one of the best smiles I had in stock—a big wide one that pushes your ears back something like this," and Billy beamed upon the audience with his most expansive grin. "Well, it wasn't ten minutes

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

before I had the old geezer all thawed out, and I sold him a bill of goods that made a profit of seventeen dollars, which paid the dentist bill and left five dollars, velvet, see? You take it from me, one of the biggest assets a salesman has got is a corking good smile. It is like an old army musket, too—the back action is a big part of it. It makes him feel good, as well as the other fellow. Now, the management of this store is paying me fifty dollars for this song and dance, and I am going to give them the worth of their money right here. I'll give each one of you fifty dollars' worth besides. I am going to make you remember that dentist card so you will never forget it. I want you all to repeat it together. There are about a thousand of you here. You ought to start something. Now then, all together!"

"Smile, darn you, smile!" responded about half the audience.

"Good!" cried Billy; "but you can do better. Put it over again. Come now, boys and girls, go to it!"

"*Smile, darn you, smile!*" shouted the crowd in concert.

"Fine," laughed Billy. "Now I am going to stand quiet half a minute and let it soak in." He did so. "There, you can't forget it if you

OF BILLY THOMAS

try. And here's another thing: A man can smile whenever he wants to. I can prove it. You are all going to smile right here. You girls there on the front seat, get busy now!" A wave of smiles and laughter swept over the audience, terminating in vigorous applause. "If you will try that game out every day you will soon find that fifty dollars was mighty cheap for it, and you will get on good terms with your job, too."

"Mr. Thomas, may I ask a question?" called a young man in the center of the room.

"Sure; uncork it."

"Supposing that a clerk wishes to get into a better position. How is he going to do it if he settles back satisfied with the position he is in?"

"I am glad you asked that question," responded Billy, "because I wanted to say something about getting a better job. When a man is on good terms with his job, that don't mean that he settles back satisfied with it. Instead of settling back, he keeps going ahead, trying to make his job a better one. 'Cause why? Because when a job looks good a man gets proud of it and keeps digging in his toe-corks trying to make it better. It may be the very job that he's cut out for. I know a fellow up on my ter-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

ritory that has been clerking in the same store for fifteen years. He is on good terms with his job, and every year he has made it a little better and has found out that it's the best job for him. He gets forty dollars a month and his meals. He told me last year that he had saved about twenty dollars a month for over ten years. He has got about \$2,600 out on interest. The last time I was in that town we had a confidential chat, and he told me that he was going to get married to a widow in town. She owns twenty acres of land—one of those thrifty little widows that raises chickens, you understand. He is going to keep on clerking in the store and she is going to keep on raising chickens. That's the way it always goes. When a man is on good terms with his job, he will make his job a better one, and will land a widow with twenty acres of land, or something else just as good. But supposing a clerk wants a higher position and has got it in him to make good. How is he going to get a better job? I can tell you just how. I never knew it to fail. Let him get on good terms with the job he's at—same old proposition, see? It's this way: When a fellow enjoys a job and is making good at it, why, it's a cinch that if he's fit for a better job it will come along and tackle him. About

OF BILLY THOMAS

two months ago I went into a store to buy a pair of gloves. I didn't know what kind I wanted. Something funny about that. When a fellow doesn't know just what he wants, and a clerk makes him want a thing, why, then he thinks that that is just what he wanted all the time, see? That's salesmanship. Well, the clerk that waited on me was a salesman. It only took him a minute to size me up and make me see that I wanted just the glove that he trotted out. He knew gloves. You ought to have seen him smooth out that glove and show me the points that made it a crackerjack. A glove was peanuts and candy to that fellow. Well, last week I met him in a hotel up on my territory. He had a job on the road selling gloves. He said that the commercial traveler who sold most of the gloves to that store where he worked had been taken into the firm and recommended him for the job, and now he was selling gloves on the road. 'I've got a great line of gloves, Thomas,' said he. Now, there you are. You see, the better job came along and took a crotch hold on him because he was on good terms with the job he was at.

"You have had a lot of expert advice in the course of these addresses," said Billy in conclusion. "You have been told all about how to

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

keep yourself up and how to make your goods attractive and how to talk them up. I won't go into that. There was just one big idea that I wanted to work into your cocoanuts, and I guess I have put it over all right: *Get on good terms with your job, see?*"

Billy waved his hand smilingly at his audience and took his seat amid a hearty round of applause.

"That was a good talk, Thomas, especially after you broke loose from that manuscript and the dress suit," and Dixon laughed heartily as he congratulated Billy.

"Sure, that came mighty near queering me, didn't it?" grinned Billy.

A group of salesgirls gathered around Billy when he came down from the platform.

"Oh, Mr. Thomas, your talk was just gra-a-nd," said one of them. "I am going to get on good terms with my job right away. I work at the ribbon counter."

"Good!" responded Billy encouragingly. "If I was a bright little chickadee selling ribbons, I would do the job up so well that they would want to put me in the silk department, see?"

"Say, Mr. Thomas," asked a young man just before Billy left the auditorium, "how is a fel-

OF BILLY THOMAS

low to go at it if he wants to get a job on the road?"

"Sell goods," replied Billy promptly. "Sell goods right where you're at. Make a salesman of yourself. Get on good terms with your job and lay for your chance. It will come along."

When Billy reached home his wife was waiting for him rather anxiously until she caught sight of his complacent countenance.

"Your lecture was a success, wasn't it, dear?"

"Lecture? Nit! I got all balled up on the lecture, so I tore up the manuscript and went at them hammer and tongs, and I got away with it, too. But say, Lot, this fifty dollars belongs to you all right. I never could have got by if I hadn't taken this sack coat along."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER VI

BUSINESS AND FEMININITY

AS Robert Cartright and his companions were passing the door of the writing room on their way in to the bar, they caught sight of Billy Thomas sitting at the writing table.

"Come on in, Billy, and take a smile," called Cartright.

"Not for me," replied Billy. "Say, Bob, come on up to my room. I want to show you something."

"Room is no place for a man on Saturday night. Come along, Billy, and have something."

"Nit. See here," and Billy motioned him to come inside the door. "What are you doing out with that fast bunch? I thought you had more sense, Bob."

"Oh, come! None of that now. I'll see you later," and Bob hurried in to join his friends at the bar.

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy finished his letters and stepped out upon the sidewalk for a breath of fresh air before going to bed.

Presently Bob and his friends emerged from the barroom and entered a taxicab.

"Jump in, Billy," invited Bob. "We've got a pot of red paint in here. We are going to smear the town."

"It's a big proposition to smear this town, Bob. You take my advice and go to bed."

"Billy, you're getting old," jeered Bob. "That's what's the matter with you," and the cab rolled away to the strains of "Oh, you beautiful doll," sung in a vigorous baritone from the window.

Billy watched it disappear, then turned back and stretched his arms over his head. "I wonder if Bob is right," he mused. "Am I getting old? No, by ginger, I'm not. Here I am, not yet thirty-two, and I can hustle faster and cover more ground in a day than any of those young colts. And I'm just as keen for a good time as I was ten years ago. Only I can't quite see a good time in Bob's program. And I wonder if he can. Something must have gone wrong with him. I never thought he would hit the turf the way he has been doing lately. If

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

I get a chance at him to-morrow, I'll rub it in good and plenty."

It was 11:30 the following forenoon when Cartright stepped out of the elevator into the hotel lobby. His eyes were slightly bloodshot and his face bore the marks of a night of dissipation. He assumed a deprecatory grin as he met Billy Thomas near the desk.

"Well, Bob, who got smeared, the town or you?" greeted Billy.

"Say, Billy, isn't it queer that when a fellow tanks up all night he feels so thirsty the next morning?"

"Oh, not so queer. When a man starts a fire inside of him he needs some water to put it out. Come on over here, Bob. I want to tell you something about business."

"Wait till I get a drink of water, Billy."

As they seated themselves in the corner Billy abruptly faced his companion.

"Bob, I helped you get that position with your company, didn't I?"

"Sure you did, and I'm much obliged. What of it?"

"I told those people that you had it in you to make a corking good salesman."

"Thanks. And I've been making good, too. You gave it to them straight."

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Yes, but you've only been out a year. I am responsible for your salesmanship, and I want to tell you something. Let me give you an idea that I got last trip. I was talking with our tea man just before I started out. That tea man of ours is a crackerjack. When he gets to showing the different kinds of teas and describes the way they are grown and packed, and then draws them up and gets you to tasting them, he makes you think it's something right out of a rose garden. He stumped me to sell more tea. I had been selling tea right along, and I told him so. I showed him my order book. 'Yes,' he said; 'but you can sell twice as much this trip. We never had such a line as this since I have been with the house.' Well, I got to thinking it over after I took the train, and I made up my mind to unload some tea. Now, you understand, Bob, every wholesale grocery company handles tea, and there are lots of tea jobbers that don't sell anything else, and they send out good salesmen, too. The consequence is that these retail grocery dealers are pounded to death on tea, and are usually stocked up 'way ahead. When you try to talk tea to them, they throw up their hands. The first town I struck was Bloomington, and I sailed in on tea, and, say, when evening came I

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

had sold thirty-five boxes of tea, and believe me, that's going some."

"Yes, I see your point, Billy; you're a daisy all right."

"Sure I am; but I've got another point that you don't see yet. When I wrote up——"

"Say, Billy," interrupted Bob, "do you think it's good salesmanship to sell people stuff that they don't need?"

"Nit. Salesmanship is selling a man who doesn't intend to buy, but you want to be sure he needs the goods."

"But you just said they were all stocked up and——"

"Sure. It's this way. Here is a man, say, who has got five boxes of tea on hand that will last him two months. He won't be in the market for six weeks. He doesn't want to buy, but you sell him five boxes to be shipped five weeks later, and you give him a good drive and special terms. That isn't overstocking him, and that is salesmanship. Well, after I wrote up my orders that night I was feeling pretty cocky, and I said to myself, 'Huccum? How did you turn the trick?' I thought it all over, and I saw that when I got off the train that day the town looked like my oyster. Every time I tackled a man I could see myself winning out

OF BILLY THOMAS

in advance. It was pep—ginger—the scrappy spirit, see? That is one of the biggest things in salesmanship. And do you know what takes that out of a man quicker than anything else?"

"What?"

"Booze!"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Billy, don't begin——"

"I've begun already, and I am going to finish it, too. There's another thing, Bob. When I started on the road ten years ago, it was a common thing for traveling men to crook their elbows over a bar. They used to invite their customers out to take a drink nearly every time they sold a bill. You don't see much of that now. The best salesmen have cut it out. These are days when men are after efficiency. It is in the air. Manufacturers, railroad managers, merchants and salesmen are studying how to save energy and get in their best licks. Men can't waste themselves the way they used to—not if they are going to get there. Salesmanship nowadays is strictly business. That Tom-and-Jerry stuff don't go. Say, I just saw a friend go into that hotel down the street and I want to see him a minute. Come along and I'll introduce you."

As they entered a shabby-looking hotel Bob

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

glanced around. "He must be some class if he hangs out at this joint," said he.

Billy pushed on into the barroom and approached a man who was sitting in a chair staring gloomily about him. His clothes were seedy and threadbare. His face was purple and his eyes watery. Glancing up, he caught sight of Billy and his companion.

"Why, hello, Billy, old boy!" he cried. "I haven't seen you for a dog's age."

"Mr. Morgan, shake hands with Mr. Cartwright. Morgan is an old acquaintance of mine," explained Billy to Bob. "How are things going, Jim?"

"How are they going?" echoed Morgan bitterly. "You know how they are going—straight to hell on the toboggan slide. Say, Billy, can't you lend me a half? I'll pay it back inside of fifty years—on the level."

"Sure. I'll make it a dollar, Jim, if you will agree to buy something to eat with part of it"

"Thanks, old man. You might not believe it, Mr. Cartwright, but I saw the day when I could sell goods with any of them. I could sell rings around any man that traveled out of Chicago in my line. Ain't that so, Billy?"

"That's what. You were the stiffest com-

OF BILLY THOMAS

petitor I had the first three years I was out," agreed Billy.

"Won't you join me in a drink, gentlemen?" invited Morgan courteously.

"No, thanks; we aren't drinking. Well, so long, Morgan."

"So you steered me up against your horrible example," grinned Cartright, as they stepped out upon the sidewalk.

"Bob, that man Morgan had the best prospects of any young salesman I knew, but——"

"See here, Billy, if you weren't a good friend of mine I would invite you to go to the devil."

"And I wouldn't go, see? I've got too much work to do."

"Do you think for a minute that I would make such a boneheaded chump of myself as that man Morgan has?"

"Oh, no; you don't intend to do it any more than he did when he was your age."

"You needn't think, Billy, that I am spending much of my time in front of a bar. I am attending to business all right."

"Over at Decatur last week, for instance," smiled Billy.

"Who told you about Decatur?"

"Oh, those things are passed around. Your competitors will see to that. Believe me, Bob,

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

these merchants won't stand for it. Business is based upon confidence, and merchants lose confidence in a man as soon as he gets the reputation of blowing himself."

"Who says I'm blowing myself? The fact is, Billy, that I have only gone on two bats in a year. One was at Decatur last week, and the other was last night."

They had reached their hotel and resumed their seats in the corner.

"Bob, I want you to give it to me straight. Something has gone wrong with you. It isn't natural for you to make such an ass of yourself. I am one of your best friends, and you know it. Now uncork it. Has business gone punk? Do you owe money? What's the matter, anyway?"

Bob sat in silence for some time. Then he drew a photograph from his pocket. "I didn't think I would ever mention this to anybody, Billy; but I am going to tell you the whole business. Look at this picture. Say, there is the finest girl that ever walked down the street."

"A mighty good looker," commented Billy.

"Yes, but her looks aren't in it with her character—that's where she's got them all skinned a mile. She's high-toned. She is finer than silk. She belongs to the Church, too, and she's

OF BILLY THOMAS

the real goods. She has got an education. I don't see how I ever got a stand-in with such a girl, but I did. She is a niece of Browning over at Princeton. I sell him goods, and he's a friend of mine. She was over there visiting, and I met her, and, believe me, she made a home run right off the bat. I didn't know which end I was standing on when she was around. Well, I went in to capture her, and I went in hard, too. Maybe you know how that is."

"Sure; didn't I get just that kind of a girl myself?"

"Well, there's a young fellow named Clark in her town. He is cashier in a bank, and a corking fine fellow. He is an all-round athlete, too, and has got some property. He was stuck on her, too, and was just as hot after her as I was. He belongs to the same church that she does. Her mother was favorable to Clark, and so were her friends. They seemed to be a little afraid of me. Honestly, I don't see how I ever won out, but I did. We have been engaged for three months."

"Well, what are you beefing about, then?" asked Billy in surprise.

"Just this. The more I saw of her and the more I thought about it, the clearer it looked

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

to me that she is too good a girl for me. She's finer than I am in every way. She is in a different class. She ought to marry a man like Clark. So about two weeks ago I finally made up my mind that I had no business to marry that kind of a girl, and I wrote her a letter and told her so, and broke the whole thing off. Now you can understand something about that Decatur business and last night. I never mailed the letter to her. I carried it in my pocket. Here it is," and Bob drew the letter from his pocket. "Here is where it goes into the mail box, and don't you forget it."

Bob arose from the chair, but Billy seized him by the arm and drew him back.

"Wait a minute. Let me tell you what I think about it. You've got the wrong slant at women, Bob. If you post that letter you will be making a bigger fool of yourself than you did last night, and that's going some. I married a fine girl myself, and before we got married I felt something like you do, but did I back up and get my leg over the tug? Nit—I went ahead with it, and it was the luckiest thing I ever did. If you were a boozier, why, then, I'd say post that letter, the sooner the better. If a man can't control himself before he gets married, why, it's a cinch that he won't do it

OF BILLY THOMAS

afterward; but do you know why she tied up to you? It's because she thought you are a whole lot of a man, and she was right about it, too. No doubt she is better than you are. I know that my wife is better than I am, but that was my good luck. The biggest asset that I've got is the confidence and admiration of my wife. There isn't anything that makes a man hump himself like having a high-toned wife that thinks he is somebody and can do big things. I can sell twice as many goods just because my wife thinks that I'm a corking good salesman. Half the fun of doing business comes from doing it for her. What do you propose to do, anyway, Bob? Throw that girl down—a good girl that thinks a lot of you—and keep on associating with a bunch like that last night? Is that the way to amount to something? Bob, you make me tired!”

“But look here, Billy, she wouldn't be happy with me. I am not her equal. She——”

“Oh, come off! Don't you suppose she knows what she wants? You don't size up a woman right. You are too logical. You assume that two and two always makes four, and of course it does in mathematics, but with a woman two and two sometimes makes eight or nine—it all depends. If a fellow strikes a girl's

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

imagination and she gets stuck on him, why, no other kind of a man has got a look-in. A girl may be educated and artistic and religious and everything else that's fine, but she's a woman just the same, and when the woman in her breaks loose, why, all that literary and artistic stuff won't go. My wife knows twice as much as I do about books and music and religion, but she thinks that Billy is the big noise all the same, and there isn't a happier home anywhere than mine. If a woman cares for her husband, and he goes out and does things and brings home the bacon and he thinks a lot of her, why, she will be happy good and plenty. Aren't you equal to that? Why, sure. Bob, you act like a chump!"

"Maybe you are right, Billy. If I only——"

"Why, sure I am right. There isn't anything else to it. Take it from me, Bob, the thing to do is to tear that letter up and stand by your guns."

Cartright held the letter up and gazed at it a moment, then he slowly tore it into bits.

It was a month later when Billy met Cartright again.

"How is everything going, Bob?" he inquired.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Business is good, if that's what you want to know."

"Yes; but how about that other matter? How is the young lady?"

"The truth is I don't know how she is."

"Say, now, you didn't——"

"No, I didn't, but she did. I guess I might as well give you the rest of it, Billy," and he drew from his pocket a letter which he handed over without comment.

It was an earnest and dignified letter, in which she explained that certain things had come to her knowledge which convinced her that she had been mistaken in him, and she did not dare intrust her future to his care. "I do not think I need to tell you," she wrote in conclusion, "how distressed and grieved I am to break off our relations, but it simply must be done. I am returning the ring to you by express. I can only say that I sincerely hope that this may not cause you the heartache that it has caused me. It will be useless to communicate with me any further. This must be the end of it, but I shall always hope for your welfare and happiness. Sincerely, Hattie."

Billy gave a low whistle as he handed back the letter. "That is a mighty high-toned girl

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

—a fine girl and no mistake. She got on to that Decatur blow-out, didn't she?"

"Sure; and I don't blame her at all. She thinks I'm a thoroughbred sport."

"What did you do?"

"Do! I took my medicine. What else could I do?"

"Yes; but what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to sell goods—that's what. I never worked so hard in my life. I am going to show these people whether Bob Cartright is a business man or a sport, see? They can't put me into the down-and-out club just because I made one or two breaks—not on your life!"

"But what are you going to do about the girl?"

"I don't know. I thought some of writing and explaining the matter, but it wouldn't go. You see, it was hard enough for me to get in there in the first place, but now it looks fierce."

"Has she got you sized up right or wrong, Bob?"

"Why, she's got it wrong—dead wrong. You know that as well as I do—and——"

"Sure I do, Bob. Come over here and sit down. I want to give you a little spiel about women. Your case isn't so bad. If you will

OF BILLY THOMAS

go to it you can win out yet, but you have got to make a fight for it. Give her the facts. The longer I sell goods the more confidence I have in facts. It's facts that do the business, and the facts are on your side—that is, you are really the kind of man that she thought you were in the first place. Write her a long letter and tell her just what you told me that Sunday. Let her understand that you don't propose to give her up. Tell her just what you are doing, and what you are going to do. Write to her once or twice a month. Send her your sales sheets. Show her that you are doing business and that you are on the square, and——"

"Oh, but that Decatur business would queer any man with a girl like Hattie Jameson. Why, Billy, she's the finest——"

"Sure she is, but see here: no matter how good a woman is, she don't object to a man just because he's got it in him to be a sport, provided she can be reasonably sure that he'll sit on the lid. It's up to you to sit tight. See?"

"Would you go and see her, Billy?"

"Nit. Stay away from her for four months—six months. Wait until you have proved your case."

"Yes, and Clark won't do a thing to me. He

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

is right there on the ground and everything is in his favor."

"What of it? When a merchant is going to buy a new stock of goods, do you quit because some competitor has got a pull on him and is after the order? Here is a girl that is worth more than a big stock of goods. Go to it, Bob, and you take it from me, you have got the pole and Clark is trotting around the outside. 'Cause why? Because the girl is stuck on you, and girls are sentimental. Every time she sees Clark she will think of Bob off yonder working his head off to make good. See?"

About two months later, when Billy met Cartright again, he immediately inquired how the affair was progressing.

"It's hard to tell," replied Bob. "I have been writing to her every two weeks and——"

"Has she answered your letters?"

"No; but she hasn't sent them back."

"That is a good sign. It's dollars to doughnuts that she reads them every night before she goes to bed. What kind of a showing have you made in business?"

"Fine. My sales are larger than ever, and last week I got a letter from the company; here's a copy of it."

The letter was as follows:

OF BILLY THOMAS

"DEAR MR. CARTRIGHT:

In view of the excellent work you are doing we have decided to depart from our usual custom and raise your salary in the middle of the year. We are now crediting your account with \$40 per week, and are pleased to advise that if your sales continue to increase we shall make a further substantial raise on January 1st.

With best wishes,

DONALD BAXTER & Co."

"I sent her the original letter. That ought to make a point, eh?"

"Sure. You win out. There isn't anything else to it."

When the brakeman called the station and Robert Cartright rose to get off the train, it seemed to him that every one in the car must know that this was the town where Hattie Jameson lived.

"Gee, what a difference it makes with a town when a girl like Hattie is in it!" he muttered, as he stepped out upon the platform. There was an undeniable significance to everything he saw. This street where he was walking—probably she had passed along here this morning. That small boy over there must know her. She had probably attended school in that building across the street. He had written to her that

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

he was coming. He had not seen her or heard from her for six months. As he approached the Jameson residence his heart was beating a violent tattoo. Despite the fact that the strong case which he intended to present had looked almost unanswerable as he thought it over on the train, he now felt somewhat like a prisoner going to his execution. Hattie met him at the door.

"Good evening," said Bob.

"Good evening. Won't you come in?"

"The train must have been late," said he, as he entered the sitting-room.

"I thought it was on time," she replied. After they had taken their seats at opposite sides of the room a silence ensued.

"Pretty nice weather to-day," he finally ventured.

"Yes, splendid weather," she assented.

"It has been pretty good weather for business all the month."

"Has it?"

"Yes, business has been good."

"That is nice."

Bob fidgeted in his chair. He then attempted a bit of facetiousness.

"These shoes of mine are pretty loud. A

OF BILLY THOMAS

friend of mine said that red russets are too noisy."

"Are they really? I am not very well posted on men's shoes."

Another silence ensued. Then the pent-up current of Bob's feelings broke over the dam.

"Say, Hattie, you must know what I came down here for. What's the use of trying to talk about anything else? It's the only thing I've been thinking about, aside from business, for six months. When I got your letter—I don't blame you at all, Hattie—I had made an awful fool of myself—I didn't think I'd ever have a ghost of a show again—the only thing—it seemed to me that if you only knew how much I cared for you—if you knew the facts—how much I need you——"

"That is just what makes me afraid, Robert," interrupted Hattie. "If a man thinks he needs a wife to help him keep his habits right, it is bound to end in disappointment for——"

"You don't understand, Hattie. I don't need you to help me keep straight. I told you the truth in my letter; how that all happened. I am not in the habit of drinking, and whether you turn me down or not I shall hold myself up four square and do something in the world; but I need you because you are finer than I am. I

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

can do more and be more with you. If I am your husband, I shall be a bigger man—a better man, see? I did think I wasn't fit to be. I wrote you all about that. It wasn't my habits—it was me. I'm not educated, as you are. You have got a finer mind. You are better than I am. But I have changed my mind about one thing. I know I can make you happy. I am the very fellow that you thought I was when we became engaged. I can make a great big fight in the world for you, Hattie—believe me, I can."

"But, Bob, dear——" she checked herself, and her face flushed crimson.

"Say it again!" cried Bob delightedly. "I never heard anything sound so good in my life! Say it again, Hattie! You are going to say yes, aren't you? Come now. You are going to say yes, aren't you, Hattie?"

"Yes, Bob," she murmured.

It would have been a most appropriate thing if he had enfolded her in his arms and kissed her passionately, but instead he stepped over and leaned against the mantel and surveyed her with the pride and radiance of a victorious young manhood.

"I would like to have your picture just now,

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Billy Thomas she would be tempted to hug him."

"Now, Bob!" protested his wife.

"That's better than if you wanted to kick me," grinned Billy. "Come on down to supper. I've got to take the seven o'clock train. We can get a table over in the corner. I want to show you a picture of my wife and boy, Mrs. Cartright."

After a jolly supper Billy was compelled to hurry for the train. Just as he stepped into the bus he called to Cartright.

"Oh, Bob, come here a minute. Say, do you know what is the greatest thing in the world?"

"No, what?"

Billy whispered something into Cartright's ear.

"Oh, you go along!" laughed Bob.

"Surest thing you know," cried Billy, and he tipped his hat good-by to Mrs. Cartright in the doorway.

OF BILLY THOMAS

CHAPTER VII

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY

COME on, Billy, and have a game of seven-up," called Dick. Leggett from the doorway of the writing room.

Billy Thomas glanced up from the book which he was reading. "Nit, I haven't got time."

"You've got all the time there is. You have sent your orders in, haven't you?"

"Sure, but I haven't got time to-night for seven-up. I have something better on hand."

"What?"

"This book."

Leggett turned and walked back into the lobby. Presently he appeared again at the doorway accompanied by two companions.

"See, didn't I tell you—reading a book?" asserted Leggett.

"He is reading a book, isn't he?" admitted Ben Clark.

"And he claims that he prefers that to seven-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

up," and Dick tapped his forehead significantly.

"Oh, come, Billy," protested Jim Felton; "ring off on that literature."

Billy lowered the book and surveyed his friends with a broad grin. "Say, if you gents will come in and sit down a minute, I'll tell you something worth more than a game of seven-up." The boys came in and seated themselves in front of Billy.

"Uncork it, Billy, and hurry up. We want to start that game."

"About eight months ago," began Billy, "I read a little book called——"

"What, another book?" interrupted Dick. "Say, fellows, two books. What do you know about that?"

"I read a book," repeated Billy, "called 'How to live on twenty-four hours a day.' It was written by an Englishman named Arnold Bennett."

"Never heard of him," said Ben.

"That don't prove anything," retorted Billy. "He's a classy writer all the same. Why, that guy makes over \$50,000 a year from writing."

"Oh, come off!" protested Dick. "There's only one man living that makes that much—Jack London."

"That's where you show your ignorance.

OF BILLY THOMAS

Jack London is nothing but a piker beside this man Bennett. Why, Bennett is getting to be the big literary noise all over Europe. It only takes about an hour to read that book, and if you fellows will get it and read it you will do just what I did."

"What?"

"You will go kick yourself all around the block."

"That settles it!" said Ben; "none of that in mine. I like to be on good terms with myself."

"What was it in the book that got your goat, Billy?" asked Dick curiously.

"Why, he started in with a spiel about time—the value of it and what a man can do with it if he uses it right and how there's only a limited amount of it doped out to each man, see? You take it from me, when you get through that chapter, why, time begins to look like a nifty proposition. Then he goes on to show how the average man uses his time. There's twenty-four hours in a day, you understand——"

"Did he say that?" interrupted Ben. "He's some writer—that fellow."

"Twenty-four hours in a day," continued

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Billy, "and the average man works eight hours and sleeps eight hours and——"

"If he's a traveling man he works about nine hours and sleeps six hours," interrupted Jim.

"Say, Jim, I saw you at breakfast this morning at about eight o'clock, and you quit work this evening at about five. You were in at dinner; where did you get in nine hours? There's a lot of hot air about this busy traveling man stuff."

"Oh, well, to-day was one of my short days, but day before yesterday I got up at——"

"All right, we will be liberal and allow eight and a half hours' work and seven hours' sleep and that still leaves eight and a half hours to account for. What does he do with that?"

"He has to eat, doesn't he?"

"All right, allow half an hour for each meal."

"And he has to write up his orders and write letters and read the newspapers."

"Allow two hours for that, and then where does he get off at? Why, that leaves five hours that he monkeys away. When I read that book I went to work and checked up that day to see what I did with my time. I got up that morning at six o'clock and——"

"Do you get up at six every morning, Billy?"

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Sure I do "

"Too early," grunted Clark. "Seven o'clock is good enough for Ben."

"I feel better if I get up early," said Billy. "Then I spent twenty minutes at physical culture exercises and a cold sponge and rub down and fifteen minutes brushing up my clothes and getting dressed. I spent about an hour and a quarter that day at my meals. I worked selling goods eight and a half hours and spent an hour writing up orders and writing letters. Those were the necessary things. I went to bed that night at ten o'clock. That left five hours and forty minutes' margin. Now, what did I do with that? Well, I spent thirty minutes after breakfast reading a newspaper and twenty minutes after dinner reading another paper and on the train I spent about forty-five minutes reading two other newspapers, and, believe me, that's about an hour too much."

"But every man ought to read the papers, Billy," insisted Leggett. "Newspapers are current history, you know."

"Yes, but part of it is history that you don't need. I took one newspaper and counted up twenty-four cases of crime and misdemeanors, and divorces and adultery and graft and other kinds of deviltry reported in detail. What's the

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

good of saturating your mind with all that tommy-rot?"

"Oh, you got hold of a yellow paper. The average paper is made up of facts about politics and business and society. And see here, Billy; a man wants to keep posted on baseball. When I see Ty Cobb go up to bat, don't I want to know what his average is and how close Joe Jackson is running him up?"

"Sure, so do I; but how much time does it take to get all of that dope that a fellow needs? I timed myself on it one day, and I didn't hurry either. I looked over all the scores and glanced at the reports of the principal games, and it only took eight minutes. That's a mighty sight different from spending forty or fifty minutes reading about what McGraw said to the umpire, and what the umpire said to McGraw, and what Frank Chance will do if his legs don't go back on him, or what Hughey Jennings means when he picks at the grass and yells, 'Ee—yah.'"

"Oh, well, Billy, reading newspapers is something like playing seven-up. You do it lots of times because you haven't anything else to do. A man has to kill time somehow," protested Dick.

"That's it! That old gag about killing time!

OF BILLY THOMAS

If you will read that book of Bennett's you will see that time is your best friend, and then you don't want to murder it. The fact is there isn't time enough, Dick. Why in blazes do you want to kill it?"

"Not time enough?' Why, according to your own showing, a fellow has got about five hours a day with nothing to do but sit around and chew the rag and——"

"Sure and that's just where Bennett gets in his work. He shows you what to do with that time."

"What?"

"Why, it's like this! The average man doesn't do any studying. He doesn't try to improve his mind, see? I'll bet that you ginks haven't put in two hours of solid study in three months."

"What do you mean—study!" retorted Dick. "I read a book on Socialism last month, and, believe me, it made me bat my brains."

"Good for you. I bet it made you do more thinking than a game of seven-up does. Well, this man Bennett says that a fellow ought to set aside a definite time, say an hour and a half every evening, and go at something solid—dig his toe corks right in, see?"

"Doing what?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Why, studying — reading something that makes him think, see?"

"What, for instance?"

"He recommended Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus."

"Epictetus?" inquired Ben. "What's that about? A new breakfast food?"

"Oh, Epictetus was one of those wise gents that lived about two thousand years ago."

"If I was going to start that self-improvement," said Jim, "I'd tackle something modern. What good is it to read stuff that's two thousand years old. What did those people know about life?"

"See here, Jim!" and Billy reached into his pocket and pulled out a small book.

"Get on to the traveling library!" shouted Dick. "Listen to the Professor now!"

"This little book," said Billy, "is entitled 'The Discourses of Epictetus.' And, believe me, it is filled with great stuff and it cost me only thirty cents."

"It looks like thirty cents," admitted Ben.

"On the outside maybe, but not inside. Now, speaking about something modern, Jim, let's open this book at random and see what we draw. I'll read the first thing I see."

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy opened the book and began reading as follows:

"HABIT:—Every habit and faculty is maintained and increased by the corresponding actions. The habit of walking by walking, the habit of running by running. If you would be a good reader, read; if a writer, write. But when you shall not have read for thirty days in succession, but have done something else, you will know the consequence. In the same way, if you shall have lain down ten days, get up and attempt to make a long walk, and you will see how your legs are weakened. Generally, then, if you would make anything a habit, do it; if you would not make it a habit, do not do it, but accustom yourself to do something else in place of it. So it is with respect to the affections of the soul: When you have been angry you must know that not only has this evil befallen you, but that you have also increased the habit."

"How is that for the philosophy of habit, Jim? Can you name some modern writer that hits it up any better than that?"

"He hasn't got anything on Benjamin Franklin," retorted Jim. "I read his autobiography once."

"How long ago?"

"About eight years."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"You take my advice and read some of it every night."

"You'd better be careful, Billy, or you will get to be a schedule crank," warned Clark. "You know Joe Saulsbury, who travels for the Wellman Co.? He went in for self-improvement and the poor devil hasn't had any fun since. When he eats his meals he counts every chew and when he walks down the street he takes deep breaths and counts them all, and every time he reads a paper or magazine he holds a watch on himself. He's getting to be a crank—always riding somebody's collar to make them get over into his schedule. Gee, it's fierce!"

"Who's riding the other fellow's collar here?" demanded Billy. "Wasn't I sitting here peaceably till you yaps came and butted in?"

"Tell us what your scheme is, Billy; how do you work it?"

"The scheme is this: Put in a certain amount of time every evening at something that develops your mind—studying something solid, see?"

"Is this what you spend your evenings on—this Epictetus?"

"I did for about a month, yes, and then I——"

OF BILLY THOMAS

"But say," interrupted Leggett as he glanced over the book, "this is all about virtue, friendship and honor and truth and all that. Of course virtue is all right in its place, but what has that got to do with business. You and I are out to sell goods."

"Sure, but doesn't that book train a man's mind and doesn't he use his mind in his business? But of course you have a point there. I thought of that myself, and I got hold of some solid stuff on the subject of business. You remember Harry Dickson, who used to travel over this territory selling soap and canned goods? He and I took a team trip together two years ago and he told me about a course of study along business lines that he had taken up—all about business economics and corporations and finance and all that. He was spending two hours a day on it. He said that the way for a man to get a bigger job was to make himself fit for it and then it would come along."

"Yes, but luck has got a whole lot to do with it," interrupted Ben.

"Luck nothing!" cried Billy. "I'll tell you who the lucky guy is. It's the man who knows how to think. More depends on what's inside a man's cocoanut than anything else. The fellow that gets there is the fellow that knows

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

more than the other fellow. What good is it to have an opportunity, Ben, unless you know how to straddle it? But I was telling you about Dickson. I missed him up on my territory. I heard that he had gone into business. I met him in Chicago about six months ago, and, believe me, he had something to tell. There was a small jobbing house that he used to sell. They were slowly running behind. Harry said that they were well organized in some ways and were good hustlers, but their location was poor and their sales force wasn't adjusted to their situation. Harry said that he had been making a special study of the matter of location and selling organizations—some ideas that he got out of those books—and one day he went all over it with the head of that Company. The upshot was that Harry put four thousand dollars into the business and went into it himself. They changed their location and Harry took charge of the sales force and they are making it go in great shape. Harry is an officer of the Company now. He said he never could have swung on there if he hadn't put in his spare time for about two years studying into business principles. See? Well, about that time I was bucking into Epicurus every evening. I saw that Harry had a

OF BILLY THOMAS

big point there, so I got a list of those books that he had been studying and bought them, and I began to put in about an hour a day on them myself, and you take it from me they are great stuff."

"You don't mean to say, Billy, that a man can learn how to do business by studying books?" asked Ben in disgust.

"Can't a man learn business principles from the experience of other men as well as his own?" queried Billy. "Why, sure he can, and here's a big point in salesmanship. One of the hard things is to interest your man. If you can only get him interested you can usually get him to bite. Now, this ordinary come-on game—slapping a man on the back and telling him a good story—is getting played out. Business men sidestep it nowadays. But you can interest a business man all right if you know more than he does about his line and you make him see it. I was reading about that one evening in one of those books, and it struck me that the average salesman knows mighty little about his own line. Part of my line, you understand, is cocoa and baking powder, and what I didn't know about those two articles would fill a big book. Take cocoa now: There are African cocoa beans and Brazilian beans and Venezue-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

lan beans; what is the difference between them and which are the best, and why? And what about the old Dutch process of manufacture compared with the American process, and what about the stuff they mix with cocoa to cheapen it, and what is a chemically pure cocoa, anyhow? Why, there are more wrinkles in the cocoa game than you can get onto in three months. Well, I said to myself, 'Here's where Billy gets into the cocoa and baking powder knowledge,' so I sent to Washington and got all the pamphlets and bulletins that the Government had issued on those subjects, and, believe me, Doc. Wiley got into that pure food game with both feet and printed stacks of stuff about it. So I began to put in one evening on Epictetus and two evenings on business economics and one evening on cocoa beans and baking powder and pure foods——"

"Listen to me, Billy; a whole lot of that pure food noise is nothing but bunk," said Clark. "I met a professor of chemistry the other day, and he said that this alum baking powder uproar was only a bogey-man that these big cream of tartar baking powder manufacturers had got up to throw a scare into people. The professor said that nearly all the alum passes off in the baking and if you analyze

OF BILLY THOMAS

the baked product you will find that the residuum of alum is so slight——”

“Did he say residuum—just like that?” interrupted Dick.

“Sure, that’s the word he used, and he ought to know, he’s a college professor, and he said that a man could eat that every day and it wouldn’t hurt him in a thousand years.”

“All right; the professor can eat his residuum of alum if he wants to,” said Billy. “I’ll take cream of tartar in mine.”

“The fact is,” continued Ben, “that people used to be healthier when they didn’t pay any attention to all that pure food dope. Why, when I was a boy there were nine kids of us in the family, and every morning we used to eat about sixteen pancakes apiece with plenty of glucose on it and we never——”

“Oh, you’ve got the wrong slant at it, Ben,” cried Billy. “We are living in an age of canned goods now; everything comes in cans—canned meats and canned fish and canned vegetables and fruits. Why, we even get canned orchestra and canned opera.”

“What has that got to do with pure foods?”

“Canned foods have a whole lot to do with it. Some of these canning companies use all kinds of injurious dope. Take just one item—

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

formaldehyde. Do you gents realize that formaldehyde——”

“Do you get that—formaldehyde?” cried Leggett. “How did you learn to pronounce it, Billy?”

“As I was saying,” resumed Billy, “you take this formaldehyde——”

“Nix on the formaldehyde! Tell us how you made some money with your knowledge.”

“Well, after I had been investigating pure foods two or three weeks I got an idea. I told Mr. Boyd that we ought to hitch our B & B line onto this pure food racket and ride it. Those B & B goods of ours, you understand, are strictly the class. We’ve got it all over these other fellows.”

“Oh, ring off! That’s just what Johnson says about their Crown brand. He says that they have got your B & B line faded.”

“All right for Johnson, but I can prove what I say. I got Mr. Boyd to have a chemical analysis made of our whole B & B line, and we backed it up with affidavits and certificates with a seal on it. Believe me, they looked as if they just came out of the court. Then I went up and down my territory, giving them a song and dance about the importance of pure foods, and of course I claimed that purity was

OF BILLY THOMAS

only another name for B & B goods. Then when they would tell me that that's what they all say I would pull a chemical analysis and certificate on them, and it was all off with the other fellows. I was bowling them over like a row of bricks, and one day I picked up the paper and saw that old man Dayton of the Dayton Mercantile Co over at Madison had been arrested and fined fifty dollars for selling some goods in his store that wasn't branded according to the pure food law."

"I saw that," said Dick; "it was pretty tough on Dayton, wasn't it? He runs the biggest store in town, doesn't he?"

"Sure, and it wasn't his fault either. He trusted the Company that sold him the stuff. Well, I knew that Dayton would be sore about it, and when I got to Madison I hiked right over to his store. He wasn't a customer of mine you understand. I could never get our stuff in there, but this time I had a new wrinkle. I was loaded for bear. I need hardly tell you gents that classy salesmanship is where a man takes a common article and puts a new twist on it and——"

"Never mind that, Billy. What did you do to Dayton?"

"Why, I began to give him a spiel about

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

pure foods, and he let out a growl like a bear with a sore paw, but I stood my ground. I told him that the thing for him to do was to make capital out of the situation. He asked me how, and I told him that he could put a full page ad. into the paper explaining how that thing happened and tell the people that he was going to make his store the headquarters for pure foods and that he proposed to have scientific tests made of every line of goods that he handled. 'Then the next day,' said I, 'put in another big ad. and tell them how you are going to have a weekly pure food exhibit and demonstration up in the lodge room over the store and have free refreshments and an address on pure foods.' Then I gave him a big spiel about pure foods in general and B & B goods in particular. When he saw that I was posted, why, he was ready to listen and kept asking questions. You see I had been digging into that pure food knowledge till I could give pointers to old Doc Wiley himself, but Dayton side-stepped me when I tried to land an order for B & B goods. 'Oh, I guess your goods are all right,' said he, 'but they aren't any better than the line I am handling.' Well, I commenced to ride his collar good and plenty about the superiority of B & B goods—I had the points,

OF BILLY THOMAS

too—and when I pulled that chemical analysis and certificate on him I had him going in great shape, and all at once he came back at me with a proposition that almost knocked the wind out of me. ‘See here, Thomas,’ said he, ‘I will put in that whole line of B & B goods if you will come back here next week Friday and give a talk on pure foods up in the lodge room.’ ‘What, make a speech?’ said I. ‘No, just give the same kind of a talk that you just gave me,’ said he. ‘I believe that your scheme is a good one, but you’ve got to help me put it across.’ Well, of course I didn’t want to pass up his business, so I called him on it, and he gave me a good order, and he and I went all over the plan for a pure food powwow, and I helped him get up the ads. for the paper.

“Well, when I came back there the next week he had the thing going along in great shape. He was serving B & B coffee and wafers free up in the lodge room, and he had some nice girls demonstrating B & B goods, and had a fine exhibit of the whole line. There must have been eighty or ninety women there. You know everybody these days is getting nutty over the pure food proposition and women always bite at free refreshments. Well, when I got up to speak——”

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Gee, I wouldn't have faced that crowd, not even to sell a whole stock of goods," exclaimed Felton. "Didn't it give you cold feet, Billy?"

"Yes, at first, but I said to myself, 'See here, Billy, there probably isn't a woman here that knows three whoops about this business, and you could talk any one of them to a standstill, and it's just as easy to handle the whole bunch, and besides they are all strangers and nobody is on to you. Now, go to it.' So I picked out one woman in the middle of the crowd and I talked to her just as if I was trying to post her up on pure foods and sell her some B & B goods. I went at her just the way I went at Dayton the week before, and I got away with it all right. I have found this out about making a speech: if a man is loaded up with the facts and knows what he is talking about, why, all he needs to do is just stand right up and uncork it, see? Well, right in the middle of my spiel I was telling them that there was no need of getting too excited and daffy over their foods and that all they needed to do was to find some good reliable brand that they could feel sure about and then stick to that—meaning, of course, the B & B brand—when all at once I thought of something that Epictetus said along that line, and I thought I would pull

OF BILLY THOMAS

it on them, so I said, 'No doubt some of you ladies will recall what Epictetus once said in this connection:

"It is a mark of a mean capacity to spend much time on the things which concern the body, such as much exercise, much eating, much drinking, much easing of the body. But these things should be done as subordinate things; and let your care be mainly directed to the mind.' "

"You got it off just like that, did you, Billy?" grinned Leggett.

"Just about like that, yes. Of course I probably didn't get it off just exactly as Epictetus put it, but that was the substance of it all right."

"That was certainly a classy talk," admitted Dick.

"Sure it was. Now of course I like to be modest and proper, but I am telling you gents right now that when a man can hand out a quotation from Epictetus like that without batting an eyelash, why, if that isn't culture then I'm a Chinaman."

"Sure, Billy, it was the hottest kind of culture right off the griddle."

"After the congregation had taken their departure," resumed Billy, "old Dayton told me that the thing was a go. He has been doing a

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

land office business in B & B goods ever since. I am going to spring the same scheme in some other towns. Now, you see, gents, where the advantage comes in working that twenty-four-hour-a-day stunt."

"We've got to hand it to Billy for improvements," admitted Leggett. "Anyone can see that his flow of verbifuge is far more fluent and vociferous than it used to be."

"Fifty per cent. better at the least calculation," assented Clark.

"I thought you would notice it," said Billy. "Now, run along, children. I want to spend thirty minutes reading what Epictetus has to say about friendship."

OF BILLY THOMAS

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOY'S EDUCATION

ONE of the joys of parenthood is that of planning and directing the education of one's child. And when the child's mother has had superior educational advantages the task would seem to be a comparatively simple one, which, indeed, it would be, if only the boy would fall in with his mother's ideas, but unfortunately he often becomes interested more in other things and being gifted with the sovereign power of choice he sets his will up against that of parental authority, whereupon this joy of parenthood loses much of its joyousness.

Billy Thomas and his wife were engaged in a vigorous discussion of this question one Saturday night after their boy Jack had gone to his bed.

"It isn't that Jack is dull or stupid, Billy," said she warmly. "He is brighter mentally than the average boy, but he doesn't care for

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

his books as he ought, and his interests are all in other directions."

"Why, he seems to be getting by all right in school," replied Billy.

"It isn't a matter of merely getting by," replied she; "Jack is bright enough to pass the examinations, but education is something more than passing. I dislike to find fault with the way you are doing, dear, but you seem to be interested only in his physical development. After you came home last evening you and Jack spent half an hour with boxing gloves, and then you went down together to the gymnasium and spent an hour in physical exercise and wrestling. This afternoon you and he went out to the ball game. All your conversations with him since you came home have been about baseball and boxing and wrestling."

"Why, see here, Lot," protested Billy, "it is a mighty important thing that Jack should get to be a strong, husky boy. Believe me, it will have a lot to do with the way he puts things over when he gets out into——"

"Admitting all that, Billy," interrupted Lotie, "but physical development is only a matter of relative importance. Intellectual training will have much more to do with his success,

OF BILLY THOMAS

and Jack needs more encouragement in that direction."

"Well, I sort of left that part of it to you," responded he; "you know more about education than I do. Don't you think, Lot, that the educational part of it ought to be your stunt?"

To Billy's surprise, his wife suddenly burst into tears. He stared at her in amazement. "Why, great Scott!" he exclaimed, "I'm not kicking about it, Lot! You seem to be doing the job all right. What's the matter?"

Lottie quickly recovered herself and dried her tears, but her face was flushed with agitation. "You don't seem to understand the real situation, Billy, dear," said she. "From the time Jack was a baby—when I held him in my arms—I have hoped that some day he might become a scholar. I want him to do something fine in the world—to be a man of culture and literary taste. That surely isn't an unreasonable wish. I am certain that Jack has the native ability. But he simply won't take to books. I have tried every way that I possibly can to interest him. I have read bedtime stories to him for years and have bought him the best juvenile literature, but the only thing that ever interested him was stories of adventure and fighting. He did like Fenimore Cooper and Er-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

nest Thompson Seton, but that is the nearest approach to literary taste that he has ever shown. He tolerates his studies in school because he is obliged to, but as for a genuine interest in them—he hasn't shown much, and I am beginning to believe that the fault is partly ours. He has been encouraged too much along other lines."

"Say, Lot," grinned Billy, "did you ever read that fable about the little hen that hatched out a duck's egg and how she would flutter up and down the bank and cackle and squawk when the young duck took to the water?"

"Now, Billy, this is a serious matter——"

"Why, sure it is, but see here, Lot, you can't make a kid to order."

"No, but he can be trained. You have an unusually strong influence over Jack, and I am glad of it. I want him to honor and respect his father always, but don't you think, dear, that for this very reason you ought to turn your influence more in the direction of Jack's school work and interest yourself more in his studies?" Lottie stepped over to where her husband sat and gave him a kiss. "Don't think for a moment, Billy, that I am finding fault. It is only that I am getting anxious about our boy's future, and you could help him so much

OF BILLY THOMAS

in the matter of his school work if you would give it a little more effort."

"Sure, I'll do all I can, Lot," responded Billy. "I guess I have been a little careless about that. I am going to take a walk down the river with Jack to-morrow, and I'll talk the thing over with him. I'll give him a spiel about school—you needn't fret. But see here, if you think you are going to make a college professor or a literary man out of that boy, you'd better forget it. It's dollars to doughnuts that he will take to business like a duck takes to water. Anyhow, it's a risky thing for us to decide that matter in advance—Jack will have something to say about that. Of course I want him to have an education the same as you do. I want him to go to college—that is, if he wants to go. But just suppose that afterward he decides to go into business, why, believe me, the biggest chances ahead of any young fellow these days are in business and the keenest men in the country are business men and——"

"Don't misunderstand me, Billy dear," interrupted his wife, "I have no thought of deciding in advance what Jack shall do, and I shall not allow myself to be disappointed if he becomes a business man, but he ought to be thoroughly educated first, and then when he

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

comes to decide, he can do it more intelligently."

"I guess you are right about that," assented Billy. "I'll give him an earful of talk about education to-morrow. But I hope that you won't set your heart on Jack becoming a way-up scholar. Some boys are cut out to be scholars and other boys are cut out to be something else."

"True enough," smiled his wife, "but we mustn't make too many concessions to that 'cut-out' idea. Let's encourage him all we can along educational lines."

"Sure thing," agreed he. "I'll get into the game all right. Don't you worry about that."

On the following afternoon when Billy and his boy had started off down the river for a long walk, Billy broached the subject of education.

"How's school going, boy?" he asked.

"Oh, pretty good," replied Jack; "I don't get along very well with old Skinny Johnson."

"Who is Skinny Johnson?"

"He teaches history." Jack suddenly caught sight of a small flat stone. "I bet I can make this stone skip a dozen times in the water, Dad," and he proceeded to do so.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Why don't you get along well in history?" persisted Billy.

"Why, what's the use of spending so much time on things that happened a thousand years ago?" protested Jack. "Old Skinny Johnson seems to think that that's the whole thing."

"Why, sure, it's important to know what people used to do," asserted Billy. "Don't you want to know about wars and kings and all that?"

"I'd rather know about the ball games. We have got a dandy team in our school. They picked me to play on our team."

"What position do you play?" asked Billy curiously.

"First base."

"Well, that first bag is a mighty important position," said Billy. "Next to a good pitcher, why, a corking good first baseman is a——"

"A first baseman makes more put-outs than a pitcher," interrupted Jack.

"Why, sure—that is expected of him," agreed Billy, "but a good battery is half of the game. When a team gets to poling 'em out all over the lot, what can a first baseman do?"

"I'd rather play first base like Frank Chance than be any pitcher in the league," asserted Jack.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Why, see here, boy, where does a first baseman come in when old Matty is in the box? But say, we were talking about education. It's a big thing for a fellow to know all about the past ages; you take it from me."

"We studied about Egypt last week. What's the good of all that, Dad?"

"Why, you take those pyramids now, it was a corking big job, putting up those pyramids. Mr. Boyd was over there last year and he said——"

"Do you think it was a bigger job to build the pyramids than to put up one of those skyscrapers in Chicago?"

"I don't know about that, but just the same those pyramids have got all the other monuments of antiquity skinned a mile."

Just then Jack caught sight of a number of smooth round stones. "Gee, Dad, look here! I bet I can peg one of them stones farther out into the river than you can."

"Don't be sure about that," rejoined Billy, removing his coat. "I used to be a pretty good thrower myself." To Billy's surprise, Jack out-threw him.

"Where did you learn to throw like that?" he asked.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Playing baseball," grinned Jack. "You bet I can peg it down to third all right."

"That's one of the big points of the game," cried Billy. "Archer can snap 'er down to second without standing up. You bet they don't steal second on old Archer. But speaking about school, you don't want to forget, boy, that a good education is what puts pep into a fellow and helps him put things across when he gets out into life."

"Say, Dad, I bet our team will win the city championship. Gee, I hope we can beat out that Whittier team. There's a kid by the name of Madigan plays first base on that team, and when we played them last week he tripped me and mighty near threw me and then tried to make me back down when I kicked."

"Did he give you any back talk?" inquired Billy.

"He said he would knock my block off when he caught me off the ball ground."

"What did you say?"

"I told him he needn't wait till we got off the ball ground."

"Do you think he could lick you?"

"Lick nothing! It isn't any sign he could lick me just because he can lick those kids in

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

the Whittier School. They're a bunch of sissies up there, anyway "

"Oh, well, don't get into a fight, Jack, unless you have to."

"Would you have backed down if you had been me, Dad?"

"Oh, of course you had to stand up to him," replied Billy. "What did Madigan do?"

"He dried up and then the game went on, and after the game was over I waited for him outside, but he didn't show up."

"It don't pay to stand around with a chip on your shoulder," advised Billy. "You faced him down and that was enough. But about school now, you want to dig your toe corks in this year because when you get into High School next year you——"

"Did you go through High School, Dad?"

"No—I only went two years, and then I had to get out and hustle for my own living. But see here, Jack, let's sit down on this log—I want to tell you a few things about that. All my life I have regretted that I didn't have an education. Believe me, boy, the men that get ahead in this world are the men who can think——"

"But you make about four thousand dollars a year, Dad. Gee, if I can ever make as much

OF BILLY THOMAS

as that I'll be satisfied. Mother seems to think that a fellow ought to have his nose in a book all the time."

"Well, your little mother has got some mighty good ideas about it, too. She has got a first-class education, and when I was trying to get her to marry me, why, believe me, I got cold feet a dozen times. I won out on my nerve, Jack. I really didn't have any right to get such a fine educated girl as she was. I don't understand yet why she took me. It was just my good luck and yours, too, Jack. She's a wonderful little mother, and don't you forget it. Well, after we got married I made up my mind that I was going to educate myself the best I could and every time I left home on a trip I would put a good book into my grip—your mother helped me pick them out—and every evening after my day's work I would spend about an hour batting my brains over that book, and I kept that thing up for five or six years, and went through a stack of books, too. When I would get home your mother and I would talk the book over. But it's mighty hard work, Jack, trying to educate yourself evenings after doing a man's work all day. Many an evening I would be so tired that I would drop off to sleep and the book would fall

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

to the floor and wake me. But I stuck to it, boy, and I put it across, too—in a way. I learned a whole lot during those years. I finally got so much business and had to work evenings so often that I was obliged to stop that evening study—that is, I did stop it. Sometimes I think that I'll begin it again. It was a big thing for me. It helped me out in great shape and your mother spent a lot of time helping me along. The more I mix with business men the more I see how important it is for a man to develop his brains. The man who does things, Jack, is the man who has got gray matter in his cocoanut, one who can reason things out and make quick decisions; and where do ideas come from, Jack? Why, they come from a man's knowledge of principles, and that's where education comes in. But it's mighty tough, my boy, to work hard all day and then try to get an education evenings all by yourself. It can be done, and I am going after it again one of these days. But the right time to do it is when a fellow is young. I wish that I had had the chance when I was a kid ~? that you've got right now."

Billy had sprung up from the log and was pacing back and forth in front of Jack, who

OF BILLY THOMAS

sat in open-mouthed interest at his father's earnest talk.

Billy saw that he had driven his point home. "Let's go down to the bend and take a swim before we go back," suggested he.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER IX

BASEBALL, BOOKS AND BUSINESS

AMONG the other attractions of story writing—even stories that are liberally interspersed with facts—is the privilege of taking liberties with time, tide and money—those tyrants that dominate us so in the matter-of-fact world. At a stroke of the pen one can create a millionaire. Another stroke and half a century has passed away. In the present case this semi-creative privilege is exercised in a modest way, considering that only five years have now elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter.

Billy Thomas was sitting in the hotel reading a letter from his wife:

“BILLY, DEAR:

“I shall be so glad when you get home. I have felt so anxious this week about Jack. Last Saturday night he went with some of his school friends to a dance at Turner Hall, and he got

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

college has the best baseball and football team. Of course, Billy, dear, his class standings have been very good—he is going to graduate, so his teachers tell me—but since he got to playing on the baseball team his mind seems to run all in that direction. I hope that when you get in from this trip you can arrange to spend some time with him. He certainly needs his father's advice. You know that Jack thinks everything his father says is about right.

Lovingly,
LOTTIE."

When Billy reached home, a few days later, he found his wife still in a state of nervous anxiety—so much so that he entered a vigorous protest.

"Why, see here, Lot, it isn't so bad as all that. Jack isn't getting to be a sport just because he made one or two bad breaks. Every kid is liable to slip a cog now and then. I remember the first year I was on the road I went to a dance one Saturday night with the boys and got into a fracas, and I had a fight on the ballroom floor with a fellow named Morrissey, who tried to put something over on me."

"Why, Billy, you never told me about it."

"Why should I? I hadn't thought about it

OF BILLY THOMAS

for years till I got your letter about Jack, and that made me think of it. But I was going to say: Did I ever go to that joint again? Nit! It wasn't because I got licked either—I had the best of the scrap—but I got to thinking about it, and I saw that if I was ever going to get anywhere in business I'd have to cut that out, and I did. You needn't fret about Jack. He is probably more ashamed of the thing than he lets on."

"But you will talk with him about it, won't you, Billy, dear?"

"Sure. I'll give him an earful of straight talk—you leave that to me. I'm going to have Jack go fishing up at the lake with me next Saturday."

"And you will talk to him about college and athletics, too, won't you, dear? I overheard him telling one of the high school boys yesterday how the league teams are making such good offers to college players. You don't suppose that Jack can be thinking of becoming a professional ball player, do you?"

"Well, I don't know. A kid is liable to think of most anything. But what's the use of fretting about a thing till you're up against it? Don't you know, Lot, that the worst troubles we have are the ones that never come across?"

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

Early on Saturday morning Billy and his boy, arrayed in their khaki suits, with lunch basket and fishing tackle in hand, started out for the lake. Mrs. Thomas stood at the window watching them until they disappeared around the corner.

"I always feel so safe when Jack is with his father," she murmured.

The weather was fine, and the fishing good. They caught a string of bass and several good-sized pickerel. In the heat of the day they went in swimming together. At noon they gathered some fuel and roasted some fish over a fire.

"Gee! isn't this a great lunch that mother put up?" mumbled Jack, his mouth full of buns and jam.

"That's what," admitted Billy. "Your little mother likes to do things for us, boy. You and I are lucky guys to have a girl like her stuck on us. You will appreciate it more when you get older."

"I wish mother wouldn't go up in the air so every time a fellow——"

"Gets into a fight up at Turner Hall?" interrupted Billy.

Jack regarded his father with an embarrassed grin.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"What about it, Jack?" asked Billy.

"Why, I went down there with the fellows——"

"You knew it was a joint, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, in a general way; but anyway, Dad, I went. I met a girl up there that was a good looker and a good dancer, and she and I took to each other. She was a decent sort of a girl, I guess, and we had a lot of dances together. Well, there was a fellow there named Kelly that was rushing this girl. I didn't know anything about that, of course, and he got jealous of me and didn't know any better than to show it. He commenced to rough-house, and kept bumping into me. I thought it was accidental at first, till the girl called attention to it. I tried to avoid him, but he was bound to have trouble; and after a while he was dancing in the same set that I was in, and he began to throw out remarks—you know how a fellow does when he is spoiling for a row."

"How big was he?" asked Billy.

"He was about my size."

"A husky guy, eh?"

"Yes, he was husky all right," grinned Jack.

"What did you do?" asked Billy.

"Why, it got so that I either had to back down or face up to him, so I stepped over to

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

him and told him that if he was looking for trouble I would meet him down in the alley after that set."

"What did he say to that?"

"Oh, he said he'd be right on the spot—his name was Kelly, you know. When I stepped back beside of the girl, she asked me what I said to Kelly, and I told her, and she said that I'd better look out for him—she said he was a fighter."

"Trying to scare you up, eh?"

"I don't know. Maybe she was afraid Kelly would lick me. I told her that I could play that game a little bit myself. A fellow doesn't want to crawfish in front of a girl."

"Sure not. Did you take anybody with you down into the alley?"

"Yes. I took a friend along, and so did he. We got near a street lamp and took off our coats and went at it."

"Did you get to him?" asked Billy eagerly.

"You bet I did, and he got to me, too."

"Who licked?" cried Billy.

"Why, it was a pretty even thing, but the proprietor and some porters came out and stopped us. But I was luckier than Kelly. He hit me in the face several times and cut my cheek, but I got a good wallop into his left eye

OF BILLY THOMAS

that swelled it up like a baked apple. He didn't have the nerve to go back into the dance hall looking like that. I got some court-plaster and fixed up my cheek and went back into the hall and danced once or twice more with that girl, and then I went home. But say, Dad, what else could a fellow do?"

"Sure, you had to make him lay off you. But the mistake you made was in going up there in the first place. You knew better than to do it, too. How does the thing look to you, Jack? Does it look good?"

"Of course not. You won't catch me up there again, and I've told mother so; but she is up in the air and won't come down."

"Yes, and she is dead right about it, too. It isn't as light a matter as you seem to think. You can't associate with that kind of a bunch without getting to be like them. Your mother sees through it all right, and, you take it from me, Jack, we can't stand for that kind of thing at all. That Turner Hall crowd——"

"But, won't you believe me, Dad, when I tell you that I'm not going up there any more?"

"Sure, I believe you. If I didn't, I would come down on you like a thousand of brick; but don't try and put your mother in wrong because she takes it to heart. She sees the dan-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

ger of it better than you do. I am going to take your word for this, Jack, but I want you to bear in mind that if you are ever going to do things in the world you will have to cut out that kind of stuff. Business men simply won't stand for it. Why, even baseball managers won't."

"I know it. Our coach up at the high school spoke to me about it, and said that I'd have to get off the team if I did any more of that."

"Sure. And if you go to college, you'll never make the team if your habits aren't right. Have you got any preference about a college, Jack?"

"I don't know. I want to go where they have a good ball team."

"What are you going to college for, anyway?"

"Why, to get an education—don't you want me to go?"

"That depends. If your idea of education is athletics, why, you might as well not go at all. See?"

"Wouldn't you want me to go out for the ball team, Dad?"

"Why, sure. Haven't I always been buying you balls and bats and mitts and footballs and skates and boxing gloves? 'Cause why? Be-

OF BILLY THOMAS

cause I wanted you to develop a first-class physique. When you get out into the push, Jack, no matter what you go at, you will find that a good physique is a big asset. Business is like a baseball game—a man has got to have the wallop. But he has got to have something else, too, and that is gray matter inside of his cocoanut. The man that gets there these days has got to be able to think straight. And that's where college comes in. It trains a man's mind. A college course isn't for the purpose of baseball and sports. A fellow can learn to play baseball outside of college, and it don't cost so much either "

"But say, Dad, these big league teams are getting lots of their players from the colleges. You know Tom Darrow that played on our high school team, he went to college and made the ball team, and he has been offered eighteen hundred dollars to sign with a league team for next year. Gee! that's pretty good money for a young fellow, isn't it?"

"Yes, if he's going into professional baseball it's pretty fair; but, believe me, it isn't as good as it looks. The chances are ten to one that he won't make good in a league. But suppose he does; how long will it last? Only about eight years. And then what? Professional baseball

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

unfits a young fellow for business. This hanging around hotels and riding in Pullmans and playing in front of a grand stand doesn't cultivate business habits—nit. He spends the best years of his life at something that doesn't last or prepare him for anything else. If you're thinking about professional baseball, you'd better forget it."

"But look at Frank Chance and Walter Johnson and Christy Mathewson. They are all prosperous men."

"Yes, and look at John D. and Andrew Carnegie and J. Pierp. Morgan! Those men are stars. I'm talking about the average man. Of course you can take Mathewson, now; why, he is the John D. of baseball. He's the king-pin of all of them, but——"

"What's the matter with Walter Johnson, Dad? He lays over Mathewson."

"What, Johnson? You're talking through your hat, Jack. Of course Johnson is a crack pitcher, but Matty has got him skinned a mile!"

"Oh, come off, Dad! Johnson only lost five games last year, and he shut out more teams——"

"See here, Jack, when it comes to the fine points of the game Johnson isn't in the same

OF BILLY THOMAS

class with Matty, and look at Matty's batting average!"

"Why, great Scott, Dad! Johnson's batting average is higher than Matty's, and that——"

"Oh, well, you can take Johnson if you want to," said Billy tartly, "but I'll tie the blue ribbon on to old Matty. See? But what was I going to say? Oh, yes—I'm not knocking professional baseball, you understand. I like the game too well. But my point is this: take a young fellow like you, who has a good chance for an education and a good opportunity to get into business; why, he would sure be a bonehead to go off on professional baseball, even if he had a chance. Of course I want you to go to college, and I'm willing that you should go out for the ball team, but the main thing in college is education—not athletics. See? It will cost me about eight hundred dollars a year to put you through, and I'm willing to blow it in if you will give me a square deal. I don't want to stick the money into a rat hole, and that is about what it will be if you go to college for the sake of baseball. See?"

"What do you think I ought to do, Dad, when I get through college? Hadn't I ought to begin to think of that?"

"Sure. But a man ought to do what he can

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

do best. Perhaps you're not old enough yet to tell what that is."

"But how is a fellow going to find it out?"

"One good way to find yourself, Jack, is this: Every fellow has got some job right in front of him. See? Your job right now is education. If you will buck right into that, and make good work of it, why, your life job will gradually open up—you bet it will."

"That is pretty indefinite, Dad. Hadn't a fellow ought to aim at some particular thing?"

"Yes, when he begins to find out what the thing is that he wants to do, and thinks he can do it; but the average boy had better wait till he develops enough to use good judgment."

"Sometimes when I hear you talk about selling goods I feel as if I'd like to tackle that myself."

"Do you?" cried Billy delightedly. "Well, you take it from me, boy, selling goods is a great old game, and it's a bigger thing to-day than ever. The selling end—that's the important end to-day; and you take a first-class sales manager—a man that has sold goods and knows how to do it—why that's the finest kind of a job."

"Do you think a fellow needs a college edu-

OF BILLY THOMAS

cation if he's going into salesmanship or any business like that?"

"I was talking with Mr. Boyd about that, Jack, the last time I was in the house. Boyd is a mighty level-headed man. He's a big man in the coffee and spice business, you know. He never had a college education. I was talking with him about you, and I fired that very question into him."

"What did he say?" asked Jack curiously.

"Why, he said it depends on the fellow, and what kind of an education he gets. He said that the best man he had on the office force last year was a college man—a fellow named Butler. His father is a friend of Boyd's and is going into the coffee business and take his son in with him. So he wanted him to get some practical experience first, and he got Mr. Boyd to give him a job. Boyd said that Butler got right to the bottom of things. He was clear-headed and systematic—right on the job. See? He not only mastered his work, but he got a grasp of the business and made a lot of valuable suggestions about planning things, and all that. Boyd said that it was a good thing for a business man to have a trained mind like Butler had. He investigated Butler's college record,

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

and found that he did just that kind of work in his classes."

"Probably he was one of these grinds?" suggested Jack. "I never could——"

"Nit. He was an all-around fellow. I used to notice him in the house. Boyd says that he was an outdoor fellow—a good tennis and golf player, and rode horseback a lot. Boyd says that Butler is coming right along in business, too, and, in his opinion, an education like that is a good preparation for business. But speaking about salesmanship, why, when you get up into your junior year, I'll let you take a few trips over my territory and try yourself out. It's up to you, Jack. You go in for an education, and don't get nutty over athletics. See?"

"You haven't been up to the University since Jack entered last fall, Billy, dear. Don't you think you ought to go up and spend a day with him?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"I think you ought to. It would encourage Jack to have his father come up and look over the college and talk with him about his studies. I wish you would do it."

"All right. I've been thinking of it myself. Maybe I can run up there next Saturday."

OF BILLY THOMAS

Early in the morning of the following Saturday Billy took the train for the college town. As he was glancing over the sporting page of the morning paper his attention was attracted to a dispatch from the University city.

“The prospects for a good baseball season are excellent. The team this year is unusually strong. Coach Robertson has had a wealth of first-class material to select from, and in the preliminary games the team has shown itself an aggressive, hard-hitting bunch. The first hard contest of the year comes to-day, when they play Michigan. Robertson is confident of winning, and so are the whole student body. The position at first base is still in doubt. It has been generally conceded that Garrick—‘Stone-wall Garrick,’ as he is called—who guarded the bag last year, and who was one of the steadiest and most consistent players on the team, would have the call, but he is being crowded hard by freshman Thomas. Thomas is a hard hitter and speedy base runner, and seems to cover more ground around first than Garrick. Robertson has a hard choice to make. He is sure to be criticised whatever his decision may be.”

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"Gee!" muttered Billy, "the kid is after it all right. It'll be great if he makes the team the first year."

When Billy stepped off the train, he found Jack waiting for him.

"Say, Dad," he cried gleefully, "Robertson told me this morning that he's going to play me on first to-day."

"Good!" laughed Billy. "Great stuff, boy. I was reading in the paper about Garrick."

"Yes, and lots of the fellows will be sore about it, too," said Jack. "Garrick is a bully good player, and he's popular. Gee, if I don't make good in this game my name will be——"

"Make good!" exclaimed Billy. "Of course you'll make good. You've got to. See?"

"You bet I'll put over everything I've got," said Jack grimly.

"What kind of a team have you got?"

"Oh, great! You just watch our battery work to-day. Morgan is going to pitch and Bull Dickson catches. If those Michigan guys try to steal on Dicksy, you see where they get off at! And we haven't got a weak hitter on the team. You watch our fellows pole 'em out!"

"Yes, but that Michigan team, Jack?"

"Oh, sure, Michigan always has a good team.

OF BILLY THOMAS

We don't feel overconfident, but our fellows are fighters, and we are bound to win that game."

The grand stand and bleachers were packed. A big delegation of Michigan rooters was there. College colors were waving everywhere. A large megaphone chorus was stationed over on the third base bleachers. The atmosphere was charged with that electric college loyalty which precipitates into an uproar at the slightest jar.

Up in the grand stand Billy sat with his eyes glued upon every move that Jack made while the team was warming up, and he felt a thrill of satisfaction as he noted the aggressiveness and ease with which his boy fielded the position.

"Gee!" said he to himself; "the kid is up on his toes all right."

But in spite of Jack's good showing there were mutterings of discontent among the students, which Billy could overhear.

"I suppose Robertson knows his business," grumbled one of them, "but it looks like mighty poor judgment to drop Garrick out. He's the steadiest man on the team."

"Yes, but Thomas has got it all over him on batting and base running," said another. "And

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

look at the ground he covers around that bag!"

"Yes, Thomas is fast, but he's only a kid. These speedy youngsters blow up when it comes to a pinch. Believe me, if we lose this game we lose it on first."

"Oh, say, you let Robertson run this team. That's what he's there for."

The gong rang. The umpire called, "Play ball," and the first clash of the season between the two best teams in the conference was on. Michigan went to bat. The first two men struck out. The next one got a base on balls. The fourth one struck out. The crowd gave Morgan a big cheer when he went to the bench.

But the Michigan pitcher proved equally effective. The first batter fouled out. The second one went out on an infield fly. Jack was the third man up. He struck viciously at the first ball and fouled it over the grand stand. The next one was a ball, and the third one a strike. The next ball cut the outside of the plate, but Jack stepped in and met it squarely, sending a hot grounder down the infield. The crowd broke into a roar, which promptly subsided when the third baseman quickly fielded the ball and cut Jack off at first.

"Oh, well, he got a piece of it," muttered Billy. "He's got his eye with him."

OF BILLY THOMAS

The game went four innings without a runner getting past first. Both pitchers were going strong. But in the fifth inning the first Michigan man up drew a base on balls. He took second on a bunt, and was then sacrificed to third. The next man up made a clean base hit, bringing in the run. Morgan struck the next man out. The home team went out one, two, three. Score 1—0.

It was not until the last half of the ninth that the home team got dangerous. The first batter struck out. The second man up made a base hit and stole second. The next man was hit by a pitched ball. Both runners advanced a base on a long fly caught near the center field fence. Jack Thomas was the next batter up. The crowd was wildly yelling, cheering, stamping. The megaphone gang over near third base was bawling out a raucous chorus:

“Yes we can
Tie a can
On to you
Michigan.
Rub it into Michigan
Michigan—gan.”

“Ball one,” called the umpire. Jack fouled the next one into the third base bleachers. The

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

third one was a ball. Jack struck at the next one and missed it. "Strike two." The next one was a close decision. "Ball three," called the umpire.

"That Thomas is a bonehead, waiting 'er out like that," growled a student behind Billy.

"What do you mean—bonehead!" exclaimed Billy hotly, turning in his seat. "That kid knows more baseball in a minute than you do in a week!"

"That's your opinion, is it?" retorted the student coolly. "You must be acquainted with the young gentleman."

"That's what! We come from the same town."

"Oh, well, in that case——"

Just then Jack's bat met the ball with a crack like a rifle shot. It went scorching down past the third baseman just inside the base line, and rolled through to the fence. Before the outfielder could recover the ball Jack was perched upon second base, two runners had crossed the plate, and the game was won.

Pandemonium broke loose. The college yells and the fanfare of the college band were lost in the general tumult which swelled into a booming, bellowing roar. Billy was on his feet, yelling like a Comanche Indian. "Good eye,

OF BILLY THOMAS

boy! good eye! good eye, boy!" Automatically he was smashing his derby hat into fragments upon the seat in front. The student behind him was pounding him vigorously over the back. "Take it all back, old man!" shouted the student. "Take it all back!"

"Wasn't it a pippin!" yelled Billy. "Wasn't it a peach!"

The ball players surrounded Jack and carried him off the field.

As Billy turned to leave the grand stand he once more encountered the student who sat behind him.

"Shake!" cried the student. "That fellow citizen of yours is warm stuff."

"That's what he is!" asserted Billy jubilantly. "He put the town on the map, didn't he?"

When Billy and Jack were walking down the street together from the ball grounds, Jack was being greeted at every hand: "Good boy, Thomas!" "That was a corking good hit, Thomas," etc.

"Gee, Dad, supposing I'd struck out?"

"Yes, but you didn't strike out. It's the same way in business, Jack. Every day's work is like a new ball game, and the difference between success and failure is where you line out

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

the hot ones. See? You go down to the room now and clean up. I'll go and find a hat store and get a new dice box. Meet me down at the hotel, and we'll have supper together. I must go over to Lancaster this evening; I have a business deal on there, and I ought to see the fellow to-night."

OF BILLY THOMAS

CHAPTER X

A MATTER OF BIG MONEY

YOU haven't acted like yourself since that last Chicago trip, Billy, dear," said Mrs. Thomas one evening as her husband was restlessly pacing the floor. "Something is on your mind. What is it?"

"Sure, there's something on my mind," retorted Billy. "A man would be a curious gink if there wasn't anything on his mind"

"Yes, but you are feeling anxious about something. I wish you would tell me."

"Business," he responded.

"Has something gone wrong in your business?"

"No, not that. It's another line of business."

"You are not thinking of making any change, are you, Billy?" she asked in surprise.

"Not exactly; but I've been doing a lot of thinking on general principles. You remember when George Graham, who used to live here and travel for a hardware house, quit that busi-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

ness and went into automobiles? The first year after that he doubled his income. I met him in Chicago last week. He quit automobiles and went into a promoting business."

"What is promoting, Billy?"

"Why, some fellows will get up a scheme to start an enterprise of some kind—a mining deal or a big hotel or a manufacturing consolidation; and a promoter is a man who interests investors in it. He sells the stock. There's a whole lot of that being done these days. Graham's headquarters are in Chicago now. He took me up to his office, and say, he has got a layout for your life! He has half a dozen clerks and stenographers, and he stays in a private room and people have to send in their cards. He puts up a chest like a railway president."

"Can he afford it?" asked Mrs. Thomas.

"Sure he can. He told me that he cleaned up twenty-eight thousand dollars last year. He and his wife live in apartments at one of those big swell hotels. It made me feel like a piker."

"I don't see why it should. There is always somebody higher up. If one is in a congenial business and reasonably successful, why should he feel restless just because somebody else is doing better?"

OF BILLY THOMAS

"But, see here, Lot, when George Graham was on the road, I could sell rings around him. If he can do a big thing like that, why should I be working my head off in the coffee business, where I can only pull down about four thousand dollars—and that's a corking good income, too, for a coffee salesman. Graham told me that I was a chump to stay in coffee, and I don't know but he's right."

"But, Billy, dear, why do we need a larger income? We save over a thousand dollars as it is."

"Oh, of course, we don't need any more just to keep comfortable; but you know as well as I do that, the way things go these days, a man amounts to just about the size of his pile. The man with the mazuma is the big noise. It's that way in business and society and the churches, and everywhere else. Why, take it in your church, Lot, who bosses the situation down there? It's old Gordon, isn't it? 'Cause why? Because he is president of the First National Bank and has got a pocket full of kopecks. Let a man have a big wad and he gets the right of way. What I'm mulling over is this: Why not get into the push and do something big, see?"

"Supposing we lived in Chicago, Billy, and

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

you made twenty-eight thousand dollars a year, as you say George Graham does. Your standing there wouldn't be any higher than it is here on four thousand dollars, perhaps not so high. You are considered a prosperous citizen here, and I'm sure everybody treats us nicely. We have always been contented, and you enjoy your work. I think you had better get that big money idea out of your head, Billy, dear. And here is another thing: You might not succeed so well in another line. Don't you think it is hazardous for a man to change his line of work when he is making a success where he is?"

"Oh, well, I'm not considering a proposition, but George Graham hinted at it pretty strong. He said he is going to take in a partner soon, if he can get hold of the right man. So far as hazard is concerned, of course if a man is going to do a big thing he must take chances. But Graham's job is a salesmanship proposition. If a man can sell goods, it's as easy to sell a big thing as a small thing. Why not go in for something big while you're at it?—that's what is biting me just now."

"I don't like to hear you talk like that, Billy. You have always been so enthusiastic over your work."

A week later Billy wrote to his wife telling

OF BILLY THOMAS

her about a letter he had just received from George Graham. "He says that he is going to run out to Denver in about three weeks," wrote Billy, "and he is going to take his wife along. They will stop off at our town and stay over a day. He wants me to meet him there sure. I guess he has got a proposition. It won't do any harm to find out what it is, and you can have a good visit with your old friend, Margaret Graham. I will be at home on the eighteenth. They will reach there that evening."

When the evening train arrived on the eighteenth, Billy and his wife, with their automobile, met Mr. and Mrs. Graham at the station. It was evident at first glance that Billy's description of Graham's success had not been overstated. They bore every appearance of obtrusive prosperity.

"It has been seven years since we moved away from here," remarked Graham, as they started up the street; "but it looks like the same old town."

"There are lots of improvements," responded Billy. "We will take a spin around town after supper."

"My, what a poky little opera-house!" observed Mrs. Graham; "and I remember the time when it seemed quite pretentious to me."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"It serves our purpose pretty well," smiled Mrs. Thomas.

"Do you ever have real opera here?" asked Mrs. Graham. "You should hear the grand opera we have in Chicago, Lottie. We had Caruso and Tetrizzini last week. George and I went twice. It was glorious."

"No, of course we don't have anything like that," replied Mrs. Thomas. "I never pay much attention to the theater, anyway. I am quite a home body, you know."

They were seated at the supper table when Jack burst into the room fresh from the ball game. He was dressed in his baseball suit and was covered with perspiration and dirt.

"We won the game, Dad!" he shouted. "We put it all over that Lancaster team."

"Good," laughed Billy; "but you'd better go and clean up. You ought to have an appetite for supper. Jack plays first base on the university team, so of course they put him in on the town team when he's home for vacation," he explained to Graham.

When Jack returned and took his seat at the table, Mrs. Graham was describing the delightful rides around the Chicago parks in their new limousine. Jack was bubbling over with the details of the ball game

OF BILLY THOMAS

"So your team won the game," said Graham.

"Sure," assented Jack, as he stuffed half a roll into his mouth. "The score was seven to two. Those Lancaster fellows didn't get a look-in. Say, Dad, you ought to have seen Buzz Riley pitch. He fanned——"

"You know, automobiles are getting so common now," continued Mrs. Graham, "that, really, one must have a limousine. You haven't any idea, Lottie, what a——"

"The score was a tie up to the end of the fifth," cried Jack, "and then Joe Flynn lammed out a three-bagger with two men on——"

"What do those limousines cost now?" interrupted Billy, trying to appear interested in Mrs. Graham's conversation.

"We paid sixty-five hundred dollars for ours," replied she.

"And then it was my turn at the bat," resumed Jack, "and I stung it for two bags, and that put us three——"

"Of course you can buy a pretty decent one for five thousand," explained Graham, "but we decided to get something classy."

"We were six runs ahead the last half of the ninth," pursued Jack, "and then their first man up made a home run, but Buzz tightened

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

up and struck out the next three. You ought to have heard the crowd!"

"What have you got on out at Denver?" asked Billy, turning to Graham.

"A mining and smelter deal," he replied. "If we put it through, it will be the richest thing that I've promoted yet."

"Aren't those mining propositions rather hazardous?"

"Yes, for the men that buy the stock, but not for the promoter, you bet. This one is going to be a mighty attractive deal. There is a mine out there that's making good money, and another mine that isn't making anything. Then there are half a dozen prospects—holes in the ground, you know—located near the paying mine. Then there is a smelter that is paying well, and another smelter that is losing money, but if well handled it might do something—on paper, anyway. The idea is to group all these properties in one corporation, and capitalize it big and float the stock. You see, there's enough of a sure thing in it to make it look good, and there's a big speculation besides. A deal that has got a gambling chance for big money is what people bite at."

"Yes, but speculation will get any man if he keeps at it long enough," objected Billy.

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Certainly, it gets the speculator in time, but not the promoter, Billy. There's an element of gamble in every man. Half the people with money to invest can be persuaded to take a long chance on something big rather than to play safe and only get small returns. Year before last I put over a canning factory deal in Indiana. We combined half a dozen canning factories and capitalized them for nearly twice the inventory values, and it was a good fair thing at that—they were all going concerns and tolerably safe propositions. By the way, Billy, a promoter can dispose of a canning factory about as easy as a grocery salesman can sell a bill of canned goods. But I was going to say: I floated two Mexican rubber plantation schemes that same year, and, believe me, when it comes to hot air speculation a Mexican rubber plantation has got a mining deal looking like a bushel of wheat; but here's the point: it was just as easy to sell that plantation stock as it was the canning factories. Speculation, don't you know."

"I should think that one objection to that business," said Billy, "is that the people you deal with don't get to be steady customers and friends."

"They don't very often, that's a fact," ad-

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

mitted Graham, with a grin. "I sold about twenty thousand dollars of that rubber stock to some members of a club that I belong to, and they've been rubbering ever since for dividends," and Graham burst into a hearty laugh. "I've found it more congenial to attend another club since then. A man has got to keep looking up new prospects, but he don't mind that after he gets used to it. In fact, he gets to enjoy it. He can always put up more chest tackling a new party than with someone he has already dealt with. The supply will never run out, Billy. There's a sucker born every minute, you know."

"But isn't there more satisfaction, George, in a business where you give a man the worth of his money?"

"Oh, possibly—sometimes. But the fact is, Billy, everybody is after profit. The real satisfaction in a deal depends, after all, on what you make out of it. But what is the worth of your money, anyway? If a man buys stock where there's a good gambling chance to make a big thing, isn't that chance the worth of his money? The fact is, Billy, that fifty per cent. of the big business of the country is pure hazard. Men are always capitalizing the future. If they didn't, the country wouldn't grow. You take it from me, the men who are making the

OF BILLY THOMAS

money are those who capitalize chances and float the stock. Take Schwab and Carnegie and Harriman and all that bunch, when did they begin to rake in their millions? Why, it was when they commenced to pump in the hot air. It's the same way with us small fellows. If a man sticks to merchandise, for instance, why, he has got to take small profits. The big money in the selling game is in putting over a proposition that has got more or less blue sky in it, see?"

"What proportion of your deals pan out?" asked Billy; "that is, for the fellows who buy the stock?"

"Oh, I don't know; about half, I guess."

"Don't the fellows that lose their money make a roar?"

"Sometimes. One man sued me last year. He lost eight thousand dollars, and claimed that I made false representations. He really didn't have any case; at least he couldn't have proved it, but I settled the matter. I didn't want to bother with a lawsuit. But the average man takes his medicine and charges it up to experience. There's a principle of law, Billy, called *Caveat Emptor*, which means, let the buyer look out for himself; and when it comes

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

to a deal that involves speculation, why, it's *Caveat Emptor* for your life."

After supper Billy and his guest retired to the library for a smoke; meanwhile Mrs. Thomas and her friend engaged at conversation in the sitting-room.

"You haven't admired my diamond," said Mrs. Graham, as she held her ring out for inspection. "George paid fifteen hundred dollars for it. I scolded him for extravagance, but not very hard, I fear. I did want a diamond."

"Yes, I noticed it," said Mrs. Thomas. "It is very beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yes. Nearly all the women in our club have diamonds, and I felt insignificant without one. You should visit our club, Lottie," and Mrs. Graham launched into an enthusiastic description of their new club-house.

"What do the women do at their meetings?" asked Mrs. Thomas.

"Oh, whatever they like. We played bridge much of the time this fall. Did you ever play bridge, Lottie?"

"No. I never got interested in cards."

"Perhaps you would if you should try bridge—especially when the stakes are moderately high."

"The stakes?"

OF BILLY THOMAS

"Why, yes. There isn't any excitement in it without stakes."

"You don't mean to say, Margaret, that you play for money?"

"Certainly, you goosey, it is a very common thing in society now."

"Why, Margaret, that is gambling!"

"Dear me, I suppose you might call it that, but it is no more gambling than playing for a prize. In both cases it's a game of chance—trying to get something for nothing. So far as losing is concerned I don't see the harm, if one can afford it."

"You distress me, Margaret, dear. You didn't do such things years ago."

"Why, really, Lottie, it all depends upon what one is accustomed to. It doesn't seem bad when all your associates do it. What would you say, I wonder, if you saw women smoking cigarettes?"

"I would think them loose characters," asserted Mrs. Thomas, warmly.

"Well, they have a smoking-room in our club where the members can smoke cigarettes, and many of them do it. The custom is spreading in all the cities now."

"If I were you, Margaret, I wouldn't belong to such a club."

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

"They are among the best people in our part of the city," asserted Mrs. Graham. "Why shouldn't a woman smoke if she wishes?"

"Because tobacco is unclean, for one thing. A woman can't be as pure physically if she uses it."

"Is it any worse for a woman than for a man?"

"Yes, both physically and morally worse. A woman is more delicately and nervously organized than a man, and tobacco would injure her more. Then the public standard of purity is higher for a woman than for a man. I don't say that it ought to be, but it is, and one can't fly in the face of public opinion on a moral question without growing less moral herself. Furthermore, Margaret, the fact that men lower their own standard of personal purity is no reason why women should lower theirs."

"That Presbyterian conscience is a dreadfully uncomfortable thing," said Mrs. Graham, with a smile. "It prevents you from enjoying life."

That evening, after their guests had retired, Billy told his wife about the proposition which Graham had made to him. "He offered me a

OF BILLY THOMAS

partnership with a third interest the first year, and he guarantees eight thousand dollars."

"What did you tell him?" she asked.

"Oh, I said I would think it over and let him know."

"You haven't any idea of accepting it, have you, Billy, dear?"

"Why, I am going to chew on it pretty hard," said he. "Such chances don't come along every day. Don't you like the idea?"

"No, I don't like it at all."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, I am afraid that his business isn't very honorable, and I can't help thinking that George's big money is a bad thing for him and Margaret both."

"Well, when you come down to brass tacks, Lot, a strictly honorable business comes pretty near being a pipe dream."

"Isn't your business honorable, Billy?"

"Why, it's as honest as any, but, believe me, there are all sorts of wrinkles."

"At any rate, Billy," she interrupted, "you give people value for their money. But look at those schemes that George told about at the supper table. You wouldn't wish to do such things, would you, Billy, dear?"

"Now see here, Lot, everybody that makes

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

big money goes into schemes like that. Take brother Gordon, now, in your church. Didn't he manage the consolidation of three candy factories last year, and water the stock about fifty per cent., and clean up about twenty thousand dollars on the deal? And isn't he a good Presbyterian? Why, you take these Moguls that have been putting over those big trusts and cleaning up millions, aren't they Methodists and Baptists and Episcopalians till you can't rest? Aren't they the boys that come across with the fifty-thousand-dollar checks for missions? Sure thing!"

"I don't know about all that, Billy, but one thing I do know: if a business transaction doesn't perform a real service to society—something that people really need—it isn't honorable. Furthermore, I would dread to have you get after money the way George Graham is. Look at the change in him—the moral change—and he doesn't seem to realize it. And look at Margaret. She used to be interested in home. She isn't the same girl at all."

"Oh, yes, she is; only she's got all the modern improvements," grinned Billy.

"Do you remember," continued Mrs. Thomas, "when George and Margaret lived here, how they used to come over on Saturday

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

square; but see here, Lot, if you think that the wholesale coffee and spice business is so almighty upright that it leans over backward, why, you've got another guess coming. How about coal tar products and formaldehyde and copperas and the Lord knows what else in your foods?"

"Now, Billy, that is the first time I ever heard you intimate that the business of Boyd & Bidwell wasn't honest. I don't believe——"

"Don't think that I'm knocking the house, Lot; they are one of the squarest firms in the game, but all the same——"

"What you are really trying to do, Billy, is to argue yourself into believing that George Graham's business is as legitimate and honorable as yours. I am only a woman, and I don't understand all the intricacies of business, but I can see a great moral difference between dealing in hazards, as George Graham puts it, and dealing in merchandise. I don't want to see you subjected to such temptations, Billy, dear. I just couldn't bear it!"

Billy gazed in astonishment at the flushed face of his wife and the gathering tears in her eyes. "Why, say, this thing is getting on your nerves; anyone would think, to hear you talk,

OF BILLY THOMAS

that I was planning to murder my mother-in-law."

"Moral suicide is almost as bad, Billy."

"Another feature of the matter, Lot, is this: I have got about as far up in the traveling game as I can get in my line. If I hold my trade up to last year's mark it's about the best I can do, and here I am only forty-four years old, and I've got a hunch that it's in me to do something a mighty sight bigger. Women don't understand it, I guess; but there's something inside of a fellow that compels him to go to it and put across the best he's got. Do you remember that evening, Lot, about twenty years ago when you and I were walking down Parker's lane and I was starting to tell you how much I cared for you—Gee! I'll never forget that evening—maybe I wasn't sweating blood; I was afraid you were going to turn me down—do you remember how I tried to tell you about that fellow and his wife who were living in a Queen Anne cottage and then you began to rag me about living in a little country town? Now, why was it that you preferred to have me stay in salesmanship? It was because you thought I could do something bigger in salesmanship and you wanted to live in a city—isn't that so? And now when I've got a chance to

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

make the biggest kind of a turn in salesmanship and live in one of the big cities, why, here you are——”

“Now, Billy, listen,” interrupted his wife. “I did wish to have you keep on in salesmanship because I could see that you were a natural salesman and I wished you to do what you could do best, and was I not right? Isn’t it true that you have been a successful salesman? And I did wish to live in a city of respectable size where we could enjoy the reasonable conveniences and opportunities of life, and that is what we have done. We have accumulated a nice property and we have been happy together. Isn’t that so, dear? It isn’t that I wish you to stand still, Billy. I am as ambitious for you as you are for yourself and I feel sure that advancement will come in time because you deserve it, but not such advancement as this. I want our boy always to honor his father and never to have any cause to doubt his integrity and really down in your heart you feel the same way about it. I’m sure you do, Billy, dear,” and Lottie stepped over to his side and gave Billy a kiss.

“Oh, well, maybe this proposition of Graham’s is the thing and maybe it isn’t,” grinned

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy. "Anyhow, we haven't got to settle it to-night. I'm tired. Let's go to bed."

"I want to ask your advice about a confidential matter before you go, Billy," said Hiram Johnson, as Billy Thomas closed his order book and picked up his sample case.

"All right, uncork it. If there's anything I'm long on, it's advice."

"You know my business here has been going ahead in good shape, and I ought to build an addition on my store and increase my stock. I could use twice the room that I've got. But if I build I might as well plan to stay in this town permanently. It's a pretty good town, Billy, but rather slow. I have a chance to sell out at a mighty good figure. Now I always had an idea that some day I would move into a larger town and tackle a bigger business proposition. There was Fitzgerald that used to run a store down in the next block, and he did a good business, too—you used to sell him—he sold out and went up into the mining country, you know, and started a store, and they say he is making all kinds of money. I knew that you travel up there, and I thought I would ask."

"Sure, I know that country, and I know about Fitzgerald, too. I sell him up there, and

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

he is making money all right. He has pulled down over twelve thousand dollars clear in the last three years in his business alone, and he has made some money dabbling in mines, too."

"That's just it," cried Johnson, eagerly; "and why couldn't I do the same thing?"

"You have built up a good solid business here, Hi," mused Billy.

"Yes, I have. It has been a steady thing. My inventory shows fifteen hundred dollars more than last year."

"Of course this town will never be a very big city," continued Billy. "The town is something like your business—a good, moderate, growing proposition. There's a rich farming country around here. It will always be a good town. It's a pleasant place to live in, isn't it?"

"Certainly. We have good schools and churches and solid public improvements. But the town is slow, Billy, and always will be slow."

"Now, let's see about Fitzgerald," said Billy. "I know him well, and he's a friend of mine. He has been prospering, but, between you and me, Fitz has been getting nutty over mines. He doesn't stay in the store much. He leaves most of that to his partner now. The fact is, he is cracked after big money, and is

OF BILLY THOMAS

getting to be the most restless cuss you ever saw. I see that the last Bradstreet report mentions these things as if they reflected a little on his credit, and Bradstreet is no bonehead. You see, Hi, the difference between this country and that is the difference between agriculture and mines. One is a sure thing and the other is more or less of a speculation. That town is humming just now, and is ten times as big as this, but there is ten times as much hazard about it, too. I know Fitz, and I know you, and, believe me, you have got it all over him so far as enjoying life is concerned. Why, even if he wins out big you have got the bulge on him. 'Cause why? Because you are on solid ground, and he skates over thin ice part of the time. You take it from me, Hi, big money isn't the whole——" Billy suddenly paused, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, he began to pace the floor. He halted and burst into a hearty laugh.

"What's the joke?" asked Johnson in surprise.

"Oh, nothing. I thought of something else; but, say, Hi, does that sound like good sense—what I've been giving you?"

"Pretty darn good sense, I'll admit," said Johnson.

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

That evening, after Billy had written up his orders, he returned to his room and began to prepare for bed, when it suddenly occurred to him that the time for deciding upon George Graham's proposition had come. "I've got to settle it some time," he muttered, "and here goes."

He drew from his pocket a couple of letters which he had received that day, and carefully read them a second time. One was from Graham:

"DEAR BILLY:

I expected to hear from you before this. It seems to me that you ought not to hesitate a minute. Things are moving finely. That Denver scheme is a go. It ought to be good for eight thousand dollars. Believe me, Billy, the firm of Graham & Thomas will make them sit up and take notice. Let me know your decision as soon as possible. Wire me that you will accept.

Yours,
GRAHAM."

The other letter was from his wife. She carefully reviewed the many good reasons, as they seemed to her, why he ought to decline the offer. "But, after all," she wrote in conclusion, "it is not with me so much a matter of reason as it is of instinct. I just *feel* that you

OF BILLY THOMAS

would better not do it. Please don't think that I would stand in the way of your ambition, Billy, dear, but don't you remember how it has always been a theory of yours that if a man earns a larger place it will come? Don't you think you can safely continue to trust that theory? And don't you think it the wisest plan never to go into an enterprise where there is doubt about the integrity of it? Lovingly, Lottie."

Billy's cigar had gone out. He chewed the end of it vigorously. He took a photograph from his pocket and gazed at it. "You're all wool and a yard wide, girly," said he. He opened his suit-case and took out a telegraph blank, upon which he wrote the following message to Graham:

"Ever so much obliged, old man, but it's me for coffee and baking powder. BILLY."

He wrote a hurried note to his wife telling her of his decision, and then, ringing for the bell-boy, he sent both messages off.

The following Saturday night, after Billy had reached home and the family were seated at the supper table, Mrs. Thomas turned to Jack. "Go in and bring daddy that letter on

THE BUSINESS ADVENTURES

the library table. I nearly forgot it. I always get fussed so when you come home, Billy." Billy opened and read the following letter from his company:

"DEAR BILLY:

As the end of the year approaches we are discussing that building project again. The past year has been a successful one, and it looks clear that we must provide larger facilities. We are also considering a plan to reorganize the company and turn it into a corporation. In case we do so, how would you like to get in on the ground floor and take about ten thousand dollars of stock in the new company? It seems to us, in case we build, that we should materially increase our sales force and establish a new position in the company—that of sales-manager. We should have a man in exclusive charge of the selling end, letting him act as house salesman and giving him entire charge of the sales force. It is our opinion that you are the man for that position. Of course this would involve a substantial increase in salary. Think it all over, and when you come in let us have the benefit of your ideas. We intend to confine the stock to the present members of the company, excepting that which you may take.

Very truly,

BOYD & BIDWELL, C. & S. M.

Per B."

OF BILLY THOMAS

Billy handed the letter over to his wife without comment. As she read it her eyes filled with tears.

"Now don't you see, Billy, dear," she cried, "that——"

"Oh, 'sure," broke in Billy with a laugh. "It pays to have a Presbyterian for a wife."

THE END